

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XVIII, Issue No. 345

THURSDAY DECEMBER 11, 2008

www.saipantribune.com 50¢

Visit us online @
www.saipantribune.com



OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Do you think there should have been a run-off in the non-voting delegate election, since none of the candidates won a majority of the votes?

Let your voice be heard!
Go to
www.saipantribune.com
to cast your vote.

72 without a government budget for
DAYS FY 2009

INSIDE



Gov. Arrested

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich is arrested after prosecutors said he was caught scheming to sell Obama's Senate seat.

NATION...Page 14

Greek Riots

Greek police prepared for another round of violence with a nationwide strike planned for Wednesday morning.

WORLD...Page 16

Board instructs PSS to pay CUC \$200K. **PAGE 2**
Insular area delegates back Grijalva for Interior. **PAGE 3**

Tinian to have base—eventually

Bice says plan may take years but it will get there

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As part of the Guam military buildup, Tinian will eventually have a military base, the director of the Joint Guam Program Office recently said.

The base is several years in the making and the timeline has yet to be finalized, but the island will eventually be home to a warm base, where the Marines



Bice

will stay during training sessions and then leave, JGPO director David Bice said.

The base would include barracks and a dining hall with civilian employees.

Under the proposed Guam military buildup, approximately 8,000 U.S. Marines and 9,000 dependents will

See TINIAN on Page 4

'Future of NMI tourism uncertain'

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Uncertainty is the word that will define the CNMI's tourism industry in the CNMI for the next year, the Marianas Visitor Authority's representative for Japan and Korea said yesterday at the MVA's bi-annual general membership meeting.

Weakened economies in both Japan and Korea affected tourism numbers the past year, as leisure travel declined and tourists decided to stay within Asia or halt traveling altogether, said Michael

See FUTURE on Page 4

In this file picture, tourists are seen through the trunks of tall pine trees at the Smiling Cove Marina.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE/FILE PHOTO

Vlad Avia sets charter flights to NMI

Large visitor demand for NMI from Eastern Russia seen

The Russian airline Vladivostok Avia has responded to a growing demand from travelers in eastern Russia who want to go to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota by setting up charter flights to Saipan beginning this month.

Vladivostok Avia, also called

Vlad Avia, has set up three trial flights to see if there is sufficient demand to operate regularly scheduled

ON THE NET

www.mymarianas.com

flights from Vladivostok direct to Saipan.

The first of these charters, scheduled for Dec. 28, 2008, See VLAD on Page 4



The Marianas Visitors Authority has announced that airline Vladivostok Avia will fly three charter flights to Saipan, Tinian and Rota from Russia beginning Dec. 28, 2008.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



NEW SHELL PRICES

SELF SERVICE	
Regular	\$2.98
Premium	\$3.30
FULL SERVICE	
Regular	\$3.11
Premium	\$3.42
Diesel	\$3.75

Shell lowers prices anew by 15 cents

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Shell gas stations on Saipan were poised to lower prices overnight Wednesday following the continued decline of fuel prices in the world market.

In a statement, Eloy Lizama, president of Shell Marianas, said prices at stations in the Northern Marianas would drop by 15 cents Wednesday night. The price change had yet to go into effect at press time.

See SHELL on Page 4



Listen, it's **FREE!**

Motorola H680 Bluetooth Headset from iCONNECT



iCONNECT
888.8888

Local

Board instructs PSS to pay CUC \$200K

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System is planning to pay the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. \$200,000 in an effort to keep the utility agency from disconnecting their power. PSS owes approximately \$1.3 million in past utility fees.

In a statement, Gov. Benigno Fitial urged CUC executive director Antonio Muña to pursue all past due accounts.

During Board of Education

committee meetings yesterday, the board directed Education Commissioner Rita Sablan to use the approximately \$200,000 left over from the budget to cover the past payments, BOE chair Lucy Blanco-Maratita said.

"If we owe, we should rightfully pay it, if we have the money," Blanco-Maratita said.

The problem, she said, is that there is simply not enough money to pay for all the utilities. "I don't know when we'll pay

everything. There's nothing else we can do," she said.

Blanco-Maratita said the school system must also allow enough money to pay for vendors who are still waiting.

"We've got to pay those vendors first," she said. "Those vendors are the ones we're going to be working with to supply whatever the schools need."

A recent report by Georgetown Consulting showed that CUC's accounts receivable totaled \$31.2 million in fis-

cal year 2007, \$9.6 million of which came from government agencies.

Fitial said he wants Muña to pursue all collections because "the cash-strapped CNMI government, which has had to dramatically reduce its operating budget, is in no position to subsidize CUC operations."

According to the statement, Muña has said the CNMI central government is now current in its utility payments, but is still waiting for the Public School System to make their payments.

"At the end of the day, disconnection will not be up to CUC; it will have to be done by urgent necessity, as a result of actions taken by Mobil, Telesource, Aggreko, PMIC, and Shell-CUC's vendors for fuel, power, lube

oil, and chlorine," Muña said in the statement.

CUC also needs funds to meet compliance requirements stipulated in an order recently filed by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency, which stems from the utility company's failure to comply with federal regulations governing water, sewer, power, and fuel.

According to Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos' fiscal year 2008 preliminary report to the House of Representatives, the government spent \$4.6 million on non-allocated utilities and \$2.7 million for fuel expenses for the year.

Charles Reyes, press secretary for the Governor's Office, said outstanding ac-

counts like PSS' could ultimately affect everyone.

"I know there's this rhetoric to appeal to the children, that's all very true. But the bottom line, as [Tony Muña] said, is the bills must be paid," Reyes said.

In September, Muña said CUC was counting on PSS and the central government to pay their past due balance of several million dollars to help pay for the Aggreko generators.

Up until October 2006, the government paid for PSS' utility usage, so CUC and PSS officials had earlier determined the government would pay for that portion of the debt. But at the October Board of Education meeting, vice chair Herman Guerrero said Inos told him PSS must pay the \$414,000.



CAMP HYATT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The 14 kids who participated in the first Camp Hyatt EXPO join their Team Leader and instructors in showing their certificates at the conclusion of their activities on Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan poolside.

Reserve Center now issuing military ID cards

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Reserve Center in Puerto Rico announced yesterday that active duty military, reservists, veterans and their dependents could now get their military identification cards.

Maj. Greg Sablan of the Department of the Army E-Company 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry said new ID cards would be issued and those who have IDs that are already expired should renew theirs.

The center started issuing the IDs this week.

"We are calling for, retirees or veterans and dependents and family members of deploying soldiers to secure their ID now," Sablan said.

The last time the center issued cards was in July this year when

Military ID personnel from Hawaii visited the CNMI.

Sablan explained that this ID would give family members of military personnel or retirees easy access to their rights and privileges.

There are about 300 military retirees in the CNMI.

The center is open from 8am to 8pm on weekdays while on Saturday the issuance will be from 8am to noon.

"We thank the family members of our soldiers for their support and cooperation," Sablan said.

One of the Army programs include the Freedom Team Salute that gives all U.S. Army soldiers—active duty, reservists and national guardsmen—the opportunity to recognize parents, spouses and employers for the support they provide to the

soldiers while they serve to protect freedom and the American way of life.

This program is a special thanks to the nation's veterans. The Army will send a Freedom Team Salute Commendation package to veterans for their dedicated service and continued support of today's soldiers.

Another grassroots program is the Army Family Action Plan that gives everyone in the Army an opportunity to influence Army quality of life and standard of living.

This lets soldiers, family members, retirees and DA civilians voice what is and is not working and encourages them to make suggestions for resolution.

For more information, contact the Reserve Center at 322-6680.

Man with brain injury files discrimination suit vs PMIC

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_deltorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A 57-year-old man who suffered brain injury allegedly due to many years of exposure to solvents at his jobsite filed a discrimination lawsuit in federal court yesterday after his employer terminated him as a mechanic/waste material recycler, apparently due to his disability and age.

Adolfo M. Lumbad sued the Pacific Marine and Industrial Corp. for violation of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, differential treatment on medical benefits, termination based on disability, breach of contract, violation of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and infliction of emotional distress.

Lumbad filed the lawsuit without a lawyer.

The plaintiff asked the U.S. District Court for the NMI to issue a permanent injunction preventing PMIC from engaging in any employment practices that discriminate on the basis of disability and age.

Lumbad demanded payment for damages, costs of medical care, lost earnings and employment benefits, attorney's fees, and court costs.

He also asked the court to order PMIC to perform its obligation to pay for his medical care by making provisions for the payment.

PMIC is the operator of Power Plant 4 in Puerto Rico, Saipan. The *Saipan Tribune* tried to obtain comments from PMIC management, but no one was reportedly available as of press time.

Lumbad stated in the complaint that he was employed by PMIC in the position of a mechanic but was assigned to work in its chemical and hazardous materials section as a material waste recycler beginning March 14, 2001. He worked continuously until his discharge on Feb. 5, 2008.

Lumbad said he was exposed to chemical solvents for seven years while in the performance of his duties as a material waste recycler.

He alleged that from 2003 to 2007, he repeatedly requested protective equipment from PMIC. However, Lumbad said, the company refused to do so.

Sometime in 2004, plaintiff started feeling dizziness, was nauseous, felt as if his eyes were popping out, and had abdominal pain and headache. He continued to experience the same symptoms until 2007, when he started losing weight and felt increasingly weak.

Lumbad was seen at the Commonwealth Health Center several times and was diagnosed with an enlarged spleen.

He said it was recommended by the doctor that he avoid proximity to all volatile hydrocarbon solvents and be assigned to other job duties.

Lumbad was referred to St. Luke's Hospital in the Philippines for further examination due to his long-term history of exposure to organic solvents.

In June 2007, Lumbad went to St. Luke for medical examination. Laboratory tests indicated that he had brain injury (chronic hematoma at the left thalamus of the brain,

and chronic infarct of the left internal capsule) and an enlarged spleen.

Lumbad said his eyes were also affected by his exposure to solvents.

Lumbad said his medical treatment and examination at St. Luke's was discontinued due to the refusal of PMIC's health insurer to provide coverage. Lumbad said he asked PMIC to pay for his medical expenses, but the company refused.

He alleged that PMIC also told his wife that his contract will not be renewed when he returns to the CNMI because he was "too old."

He said that sometime in June and July 2007, he asked the company several times to transfer him to a different position such as a groundskeeper, maintenance worker, driver or expeditor because of his medical condition. Lumbad said the transfer was a reasonable accommodation that PMIC was required by the ADA to make.

PMIC, he said, denied his requests repeatedly and required him to continue working as a waste material recycler, again without the proper safety equipment.

"Providing proper safety equipment was a reasonable accommodation under the ADA that the defendant was required to make," Lumbad said.

On Feb. 5, 2008, PMIC gave Lumbad a notice informing him that his contract will not be renewed upon its expiration on March 5, 2008.

Lumbad insists that he was terminated due to his disability and his age.

Insular area delegates back Grijalva for Interior

By **AGNES E. DONATO**
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Congressional members from the U.S. insular areas are backing a representative from Arizona to be the next secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo, American Samoa Delegate Eni Faleomavaega and U.S. Virgin Islands Delegate have urged President-elect Barack Obama to nominate Rep. Raul Grijalva of Tucson, Arizona to lead the Interior Department.

The Interior Department is the executive agency mainly responsible for insular affairs.

In a letter to Obama, the three members of the U.S. House of Representatives touted Grijalva as a qualified leader who has a

broad knowledge of the DOI's responsibilities, including those with respect to the insular areas.

"Congressman Grijalva, as Secretary of the Interior, will help you to fulfill your commitments to responsible stewardship of public lands, protection of our natural resources, and leadership on issues affecting Native Americans and the peoples of the territories," says the lawmakers' letter.



Grijalva

Grijalva, the letter says, has extensive experience in environmental protection. He served 14 years on the Prima Country Board of Supervisors in Arizona, where his Sonoran Desert Preservation Plan gained attention "for its ability to incorporate economic growth in the region while preserving its natural environment and resources," it adds.

The fourth-term lawmaker from Arizona currently serves on the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, and, according to the letter, he has taken a keen interest in the DOI's administrative responsibility for coordinating federal policy affecting the territories and the freely associated states, including the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

"We are confident that he will continue to promote U.S. interests in the Western Pacific through his administration of the department's programs that are essential to the success of these nations," the letter says.

Bordallo added in a statement, "Congressman Grijalva understands the issues unique to the U.S. territories. His service on the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs and on the Committee on Natural Resources as well as his public service before being elected to the U.S. House of

Representatives has familiarized him with the broad range of responsibilities at the Department of the Interior.

She continued, "Most notably, Congressman Grijalva has an understanding of the unique

relationship that exists between the federal government and the U.S. territories as well as the Freely Associated States. He understands the issues important to the people of the territories. My colleagues and I are

confident that Congressman Grijalva will ably promote the interests of the U.S. territories, manage our public lands, and protect our nation's natural resources if appointed to this important position."

Fitial OKs 3 over-the-cap salaries

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has approved over-the-cap salaries for three physicians at the Commonwealth Health Center and authorized the hiring of three new government employees.

In separate letters to the Legislature, the governor stated that he had allowed the Department of Public Health to pay emergency medicine physician Debesh Basu and surgeon Kenneth Taguchi more than the \$50,000 salary ceiling that is in effect

across the CNMI government.

Basu will be receiving \$80 an hour, and Taguchi will get \$122,500 a year.

Physicians, among other professionals, are exempted from salary caps set by the government compensation law. However, the governor's certification of the cap waiver is required.

In related news, Fitial has allowed the hiring for three positions in Rota, Tinian, and the central government. The posi-

tions are for a new accountant for the Department of Finance, a custodial worker at the Tinian Health Center, and another custodial worker at the Office of the Governor's Special Assistant for Administration.

According to the governor, the filling of these positions are "of vital importance for the efficient delivery of public services." He added that there is money available for the full cost for the new employees. *(Agnes E. Donato)*

Fundraising drive for Ballesteros family nets \$700

By **NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The United Workers Movement turned over on Tuesday a total of \$700 donation to the family of murdered Marianas High School security guard Efren Ballesteros.

The money was collected from several businesses and individual donors.

UWM president Irene Tantiado said their group handed the donation to Ballesteros' common-law wife, Adelaida Abella.

Tantiado said a total of \$225 went to Ballesteros' sister, Aida, while the rest went to his two children with Adelaida.

"Our fundraising drive is still going on so those who would like to donate may contact me at 2857717 to arrange for pickup," Tantiado said.

UWM thanked those who generously donated.

"UWM also acknowledges the great job of Edgar Caras, our director, who led the fundraising drive and Pilipino Contract Workers Association officers and members who also helped in collecting donations," UWM said.

The following are the list of donors: Luen Fung Ent. (\$65), Vicky (\$10), Kanai & Russ Quinn (\$100), Edgar Caras

(\$5), Andy (\$25), Fiesta Hotel (\$20), Robert Potian (\$8), Jun PIC (\$20), Irma's Catering (\$19), Fiesta Hotel (\$66), Tasi Tour-Magie (\$31), Edgar Caras, collections from Aqua Resort, PMIC & Western Sales Trading employees through Irene Tantiado (\$84), and PILCOWA collections through Ronnie Doca (\$239.05).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Shown in the picture are United Workers Movement's Edgar Caras, Adelaida Abella, the common-law wife of murdered security guard Efren Ballesteros, and her two kids and PILCOWA's Ronnie Doca.

Senate offers condolences to family of Cape Air employee

The Senate has offered its condolences to the family of a Cape Air employee, who died recently.

The Upper House adopted a resolution expressing their appreciation to Ellen Wishard Holloman, Cape Air Pacific regional administrator, "for her commitment, dedication and generosity toward the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas."

Holloman, who died on Nov. 25, had served as the on-site liaison to Cape Air's

partner Continental Airlines. During her stint in the Northern Marianas, according to the resolution, Holloman "demonstrated a genuine dedication to the islands' communities and residents."

"In her commitment to the people and businesses of the Commonwealth, Ellen maintained exceptional air service in the region despite challenging economic condition, sustained air service to the island of Rota is particularly important to the island's economy and its peo-

ple, and as such Ellen worked devotedly to make certain that Cape Air's Rota Station remained operational," the resolution states.

It adds, "Through her tireless efforts, Ellen always showed the kindest of spirits and remarkable talents, a gracious team leader who was generous and giving to all."

The resolution also praised Holloman for her volunteer work on Guam and Rota.

"The people of Rota will always have a special place in their hearts for Ellen and the many fond memories of her visits to the island," the resolution says. *(Agnes E. Donato)*

*Palms Resort Saipan presents**

Christmas Cakes

December 10, 2008 ~ January 3, 2009

Chocolate Mousse Cake

Vanilla Mousse Cake

Chocolate Tarte

All cakes,

7.2" / 18cm \$26.00

8.4" / 21cm \$33.00

*** San Roque Club 20% discount applicable**

Reservation at least 3 days in advance.

Pick-up at Coral Reef from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm.

For more information, please call 322-3311

Palms Resort Saipan

'Number of unregistered gun owners up'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The number of unregistered gun owners in the CNMI has significantly increased because of an amendment to the law that now mandates firearms safety education classes, according to CNMI Range Master Ambrosio Ogumoro yesterday.

At a news briefing, Ogumoro recommended the abolition of Public Law 15-62 "for the best interest of the government and the safety of the community."

Ogumoro said the law, which was introduced by Sen. Pete P. Reyes and took effect in May 2007, will also cause the CNMI to lose thousands of dollars in federal grants as it contradicts firearms safety education regulations.

He said the CNMI needs to return to Public Law 14-51, or the Mandatory Firearms Safety Education Class, which was superseded by P.L. 15-62.

Ogumoro disclosed that on Saipan there are 1,010 gun owners, but only 500 are registered. On Tinian, there are over 200 gun owners, but only 69 are

registered. On Rota, there are 367 gun owners, but only 160 are registered.

"It's over 50 percent. That's pretty big," Ogumoro said. "We have completed inventories of all guns on Tinian, Rota, and Saipan and there's a high percentage of unregistered [guns]."

"When they [lawmakers] passed Public Law 15-62, the registration of individuals with firearms decreased," Ogumoro said. "Once their licenses expired, that means they are in illegal possession of firearms."

He reminded the public that the penalty for failing to register their guns is a fine of not more than \$5,000 or imprisonment of not more than five years or both. The weapons and ammunition would also be subject to confiscation, Ogumoro said.

The only legal firearms in the CNMI are .22 caliber and .410 shotgun.

Ogumoro said somebody needs to step forward to correct the mistake and that he is the one taking that step. "I am stepping forward for the safety of the community and the gun owners," he said.

Public Law 14-51 mandates all

CNMI gun owners to attend the firearm safety education class prior to the issuance of a firearm permit.

The education class will be able to update gun owners on any law changes pertaining to firearms as well as on the different weapon handling safety issues.

Public Law 15-62 emphasizes that the renewal of a firearms identification card is very similar to the renewal of one's driver's license. The driver is not burdened to take another driver's license test when merely renewing his license.

P.L. 15-62 amended the Mandatory Firearms Safety Education Class by mandating only new gun owners to attend the classes.

Ogumoro said having a driver's license is a privilege, but owning a gun is governed by the law.

"P.L. 15-62 contradicts the firearms safety education being that law enforcement in the U.S. and in the CNMI, including the military, has to attend safety classes prior to live fire exercises," he said.

Ogumoro said the National Rifle As-

sociation also implemented this safety structure for civilians.

"P.L. 15-62 has exempted promoting safety in the community," he said.

Furthermore, generating revenue from the fees collected decreased since the implementation of P.L. 15-62.

Ogumoro also recommended

amending the Shooting Gallery Act of Public Law 8-5 in order to allow gun owners to utilize their registered firearms in the shooting gallery and at the outdoor shooting range. "This amendment will help the business community as well as our government," he said.

SHELL

From Page 1

"Shell's average market cost of regular unleaded, V-Power and diesel fuel products have continued to ease, allowing Shell to pass the savings onto our customers," said Lizama.

Based on previous figures, Shell's move brings pump prices on Saipan to \$2.98 a gallon for regular unleaded, self-served gas and \$3.11 a gallon for regular, unleaded gas with full service. Premium, or Shell "V-Power," gas prices

es fall to \$3.30 a gallon self served, and \$3.42 a gallon with full service. Diesel prices come to \$3.75 a gallon.

Shell last cut its prices on Nov. 27 by 30 cents.

There was no immediate word if Mobil Oil Marianas will also lower its prices but the two companies have traditionally mirrored each other's price movements. Mobil does not usually make media announcements about price changes.

The current national average price for regular gas has dipped below \$2 a gallon.

TINIAN

From Page 1

be transferred from Okinawa, Japan, to Guam.

Construction of new defense facilities is slated to start in 2010, with the relocation to be completed in 2014.

The military is still drafting the CNMI's master plan and waiting for an environmental impact study that could alter plans. The master plan and National Environmental Policy Act review go hand in hand, Bice said.

Guam has currently undergone six revisions of their master plan.

Bice said some issues, such as airspace, have impacted initial plans for Tinian.

The military also is considering the island of Pagan as well as other areas in the CNMI for the buildup, Bice said, adding that there are three short- and long-term goals being considered. The short-term is considering what the military needs in order to train Marines. The second goal is focusing on how to enhance training and the third goal is looking at long-term training needs in the western Pacific.

Budget

In 2005, when the United States and Japan entered into an agreement, the cost of the buildup was expected to run \$10.2 billion. But, Bice said, due to inflation factors, the buildup will more likely cost \$15 to \$16 billion.

The economic downturn in Japan continues to be monitored, he said.

"There's no immediate effect, but

one cannot ignore it," he added.

It has been reported that Japan agreed to contribute about \$6 billion for the transfer.

Fiscal year 2010 budgets are being prepared and will be presented to President George Bush. President-elect Barack Obama could amend it.

Federalization's impact

Bice said he is cognizant of Gov. Benigno Fitial's concern about federalization and has been in communication with him.

The military is counting on the visa waiver provision of the CNMI immigration law to help Guam meet the labor demands of the construction boom needed for the relocation. There are 5,600 construction workers currently available in Guam today, but a study by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, the Defense Department's construction execution agent in Guam, estimates that 6,000 to 20,000 off-island workers will be required to reach the necessary workforce strength.

Some of those workers will come from Hawaii or the mainland, but the Defense Department is working with the Department of Labor to possibly bring in 6,000 workers using the H visa provision, Bice said.

During a presentation on federalization last week, CNMI lawyer Maya Kara said the transition period, which begins June 1, 2009, could be delayed but that the Defense Department was placing pressure on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to keep the date as scheduled in order to meet the workforce needs for the buildup.

Forum on cultural diversity tonight at AMP

By **NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Dr. Robert Underwood, president of the University of Guam, will be the guest speaker in tonight's discussions on cultural diversity in the Marianas at the American Memorial Park Auditorium.

The Northern Marianas Council for the Humanities organized this community forum, which starts at 6:30pm.

The forum's topic is titled "The Marianas Cultural Diversity: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl."

NMCH said this lively discus-

sion would be about whether cultural groups in the Marianas are truly melting together, "as had been boasted through various marketing and promotional literature" or if they exist separately and within their own subgroups "like the ingredients of a salad bowl."

NMCH had invited community and local cultural associations and organizations to join the panel of discussants to share their perspectives and experiences.

Also invited were representatives from the high student cultural groups to share their views on the issue.

After giving his message, Under-

wood would then serve as facilitator during the open forum.

Questions that would be expected to be resolved include the following topics:

- Do you believe that cultural melting does occur in the Marianas?
- How are the different ethnic groups on the islands affecting each other?
- How is the introduction of new cultures and traditions changing the Marianas?
- What impact will the second or third generation of migrants have on the Marianas?

FUTURE

From Page 1

Merner, chairman of AVIAREPS Marketing Garden of the MVA's Japan and Korea representative offices.

"The economy in Japan is in pretty bad shape," he said, noting that the country is in a full-blown recession, which is affecting everything, including travel to the CNMI.

The good news, though, he said, is that the yen has depreciated significantly, making travel for Japanese to the United States, Guam and the CNMI cheaper.

Although Japanese outbound travel is down, the CNMI saw a 3-percent increase in year-to-date number of

travelers, and preliminary figures show a 28-percent increase for the month of November. Asiana's new Osaka-Saipan flights will increase the number of seats to and from the CNMI, Merner pointed out.

But there are several barriers the CNMI must overcome, Merner said.

As airlines cut back, many are eliminating beach destinations, so the CNMI must focus on keeping flights full. There's competition with Guam and a lack of new products and facilities in the CNMI like wedding chapels.

There are several key strategies to help the Japanese tourism market to the CNMI, including an active dialogue with airlines; joint marketing programs; implementing campaigns to

target high-yield segments, generating media coverage; and showcasing new and fresh attractions in the CNMI.

The recent and rapid depreciation of the Korean won is affecting that market's visitor numbers, Merner said.

In fiscal year 2008, the CNMI gained a "huge market" share in a declining market, but in November 2008 the CNMI saw a 30-percent decrease compared to 2007. But the country's economics encourages Koreans to travel to short-haul destinations like the CNMI, rather than long-haul destinations, Merner said.

The MVA is focusing on several promotions and awareness campaigns to help lure Japanese and Korean travelers to the CNMI.

VLAD

From Page 1

is already fully booked. The mid-January 2009 charter is more than half full, and the third flight in late January also has a large number of bookings by Russians wanting to come to the warm, tropical isles of the Marianas.

Flights will bring tourists from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok where they will add more passengers and then fly directly to Saipan International Airport. Flights will be operated with state-of-

the-art Tupalov TU204-300, 166-seat aircraft.

"Vlad Avia was one of several tourism industry companies the Marianas Visitors Authority met with last year in Vladivostok, and we warmly welcome this growing interest in our islands," said Perry Tenorio, managing director of MVA. "We are looking forward to receiving more travelers to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota from Russia in 2009."

"With the possible exclusion of the Russia and China markets in the joint Guam-CNMI visa waiver program,

the MVA would like to once again echo the concern of the Governor and legislative leadership of the dire effect this would have on the islands' economy. That said, MVA and its travel partners will continue to promote travel from Russia, as in China, for as long as we are allowed to so," said Tenorio.

The Mariana Islands, three hours travel from most cities in Japan, are served from Japan by Northwest Airlines. From Korea, Asiana Airlines provides daily direct flights from Seoul and four times a week from Busan. (MVA)



MAKE-A-WISH®

Visit us at 865 S. Marine Dr.,
Orlean Pacific Plaza Ste. 104 Tamuning, GU 96913
Tel: (671) 649-WISH Fax: (671) 646-6293
Email: mawfguam@ite.net • www.wish.org
Office Hours: 8:30am-5:30pm, M-F daily

hope
strength joy!

Saipan Tribune

"I want to meet Snow White!"

UMDA settles case against Deloitte & Touche

Civil suit in CNMI against Pfaff and Larson will continue

The United Micronesia Development Association, Inc. announced yesterday that it has reached a settlement with Deloitte & Touche in a civil suit in

the CNMI Superior Court relating to harm done to UMDA by company insiders during a time when Deloitte served as auditor and accountant. UMDA has

received a mid seven-figure settlement from Deloitte and Deloitte & Touche entities on both Saipan and in Guam have been dismissed from the case.

In April 2007 UMDA filed a civil suit against Robert Pfaff, John Larson, and a number of their associates and corporate entities in the CNMI Superior Court to recover tens of millions of dollars in damages (plus punitive damages) for harm done to the company over a 10-year period ending in 2006. Deloitte & Touche was named in the complaint at that time.

Pfaff and Larson are currently on trial in federal court in New York on charges of fraud, tax evasion and conspiracy in *U.S. v. Stein*—a case that has been characterized as the largest criminal inquiry into abusive tax shelters in the history of the United States. The trial is expected to conclude later this month.

Pfaff is also under separate criminal indictment in the same federal court in a case that is not yet scheduled for trial. This second indictment, relating to Pfaff's alleged global criminal activities, corroborates many of the key allegations made by UMDA against Pfaff and his co-defendants in the civil suit pending in Superior Court in the CNMI.

"UMDA is pleased to have reached such a beneficial settlement with our former auditor and accountant in this matter, so that we can aggressively pursue our claims against Mr. Pfaff and Mr. Larson," said UMDA president and CEO Russell Snow. "If the allegations in our civil complaint and the federal criminal indictment are true, then these men betrayed the trust of the people of Micronesia by enriching themselves at the expense of UMDA shareholders. UMDA will continue to cooperate with both the U.S. Attorney in New York and CNMI governmental authorities to ensure that the truth comes out and that those responsible for damaging UMDA are held accountable for their actions."

UMDA was founded in 1966 on Saipan. UMDA has been involved in a wide range of businesses, including airlines, cable systems, and resort properties. UMDA's shareholders include the government or governmental entities of the CNMI, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, and thousands of individual Micronesians and their families. In December 2007 UMDA announced the purchase from JAL Group of the Hotel Nikko Saipan, a 313-room luxury hotel in Saipan. (UMDA)

Man files court action again to force Fund to pay his benefits

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man who has a claim for disability filed a petition in the Superior Court to compel the Retirement Fund's board of trustees and administrator Mark A. Aguon to immediately pay him his disability retirement benefits.

Jesus A. Arriola, through counsel Jeanne H. Rayphand of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc., asked the court to order Aguon to pay him the sum of 66 2/3 percent of the salary he was receiving at the time of his disability and separation from service of the government.

"Commonwealth law requires that retirement and disability payments commence on the very next pay day following the retirement or disability so that government employees who are members of the Retirement Fund do not have a break in income and so they and their families do not suffer from loss of income whenever the administrative processes are delayed," Rayphand said.

The lawyer said that Arriola has been deprived of disability retirement income since June 20, 2008.

Arriola previously filed the same petition but in September 2008, associate judge David Wiseman denied the request.

Wiseman ruled that Arriola has

been unable to obtain certification of his disability from a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Wiseman said the petitioner has also failed to establish that he has a clear legal right to the relief sought.

Wiseman, however, urged the Fund to act with all due urgency to approve or disapprove Arriola's disability application without further delay.

In the new petition, Rayphand said that subsequent to Wiseman's denial of the petition, the Fund hearing officer entered an order granting Interim Disability Payments dated Nov. 1, 2008.

Rayphand said the Fund has appealed the hearing officer's decision to the NMIRF board of trustees and the board has set a hearing on the appeal on Jan. 13, 2009.

"Mr. Arriola has been unemployed as a result of his disability since June 2008 and the NMIRF Administrator has refused and continues to refuse to pay him disability retirement as well as interim disability payments pending the NMIRF board of trustees' final decision on appeal of the denial," said Rayphand.

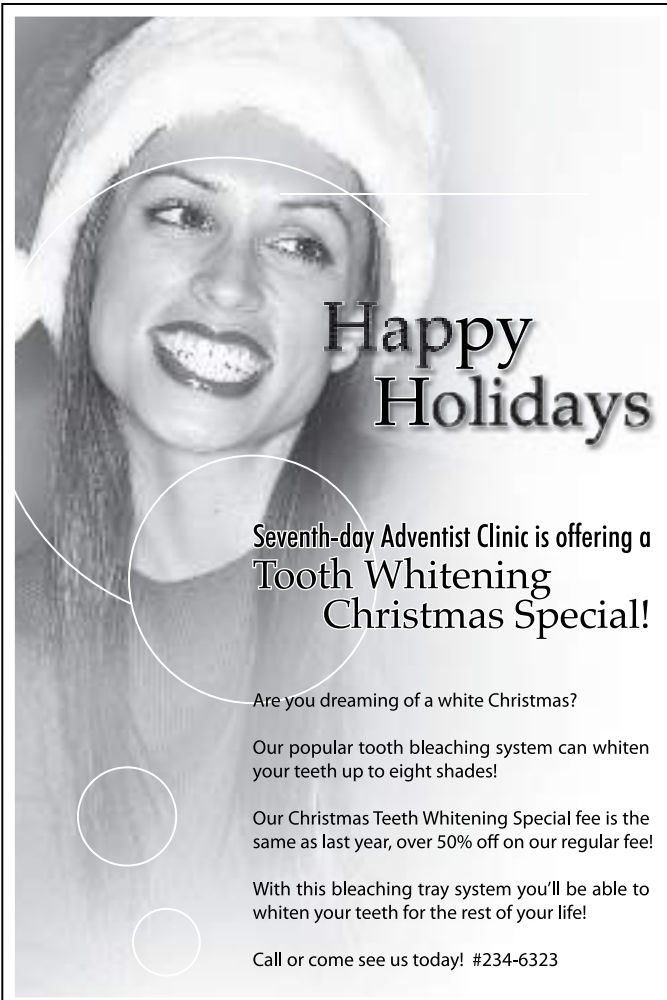
Rayphand said that on Nov. 7, 2008, Public Law 16-19 was signed into law, eliminating the need for a vocational rehabilitation counselor to certify whether one has a disability or not.



TOURNAMENT SPONSOR

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PTI participates in this year's Northwest Airlines Golf Tournament by donating \$575 worth of cash and wireless phones. Proceeds will benefit children's education here in the CNMI. From left, Christopher Concepcion, NW Sales Representative, and Brad Ruszala, PTI marketing associate.



Happy Holidays

Seventh-day Adventist Clinic is offering a Tooth Whitening Christmas Special!

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas?

Our popular tooth bleaching system can whiten your teeth up to eight shades!

Our Christmas Teeth Whitening Special fee is the same as last year, over 50% off on our regular fee!

With this bleaching tray system you'll be able to whiten your teeth for the rest of your life!

Call or come see us today! #234-6323



Exclusive Weekend Getaway

\$200 FOR 4 PEOPLE +1 INFANT

Dec. 12 thru Feb. 28, 2009

WORLD RESORT SAIPAN Wave Jungle

for reservations, please call 670-234-5907

RATE DESCRIPTION

- 2 night stay for 4 persons + 1 Infant
- Complimentary breakfast for 2 at The World Buffet
- Unlimited use of Wave Jungle and sports activities
- Check-in Fri. @ 2pm, Check-out Sunday @ 12 noon w/ access to Wave Jungle until 5pm
- 10% Government Tax is included

CONDITIONS/RESTRICTIONS

- Exclusively for Saipan, Tinian, and Rota residents
- A valid proof of residence is required upon check-in. Failure to provide such proof will result in the revision of the booking rate. Unrestricted rate available on the day of check-in.
- Only registered guests may enter Wave Jungle facility.
- Maximum per room: 4 persons + 1 Infant
- Age Description: 1 person, 3 years and above. Infant 0-2 years

Proof of Local ID required

Masked man robs 78-year-old man

A masked man robbed a 78-year-old man who was sitting outside his home in Chalan Kanoa last week, according to the Department of Public Safety yesterday.

DPS spokesperson Lei

Ogumoro said the victim lost his black shoulder bag containing an undisclosed amount of money.

The victim sustained abrasions on the right knee and left elbow. He refused medi-

cal treatment.

The suspect was described as 5'4" tall, slim and with light complexion. He was reportedly wearing slippers and a dark colored cloth to conceal his face during the robbery.

Ogumoro said that last Thursday at 8:01pm, DPS received a report of a robbery that occurred at a residence in Chalan Kanoa.

Ogumoro said police gathered that while the victim was

sitting outside his house, a man wearing a mask and green short pants ran toward him.

The suspect pushed the victim off his chair and grabbed his shoulder bag.

The suspect then ran to-

ward the beach area. When the victim was about to call the police, the suspect came back with a metal pipe. The robber demanded money, but the victim told him he did not have any.

The suspect subsequently fled toward the beach.

"This case is under investigation," Ogumoro said. **(Ferdie de la Torre)**

Miss Marianas gets Hyundai Accent from Triple J

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sorene A. Maratita said she loves driving her new car, a new Hyundai Accent that she will use for one year, courtesy of Triple J Motors, as one of her prizes following her triumph in the 2008 Miss Marianas Universe pageant.

The 18-year old Maratita will soon start her several community service activities using the 4-cylinder engine sedan.

Laila Boyer, president of the

non-profit organization Stellar Marianas that organized the beauty pageant, said Maratita would be leading a fundraising campaign for children as well as other Christmas gift-giving activities at the hospital and for the *man'amko*.

She will also be helping programs that provide shelter to those in need and join in discussions on social issues such as domestic violence.

Triple J sales manager Ben Lizama turned over the key to Maratita in the presence of Tri-

ple J's Randy Steele and Boyer.

Lizama said he just wants to extend his personal congratulations to Maratita for winning the pageant as well as for her new car.

"She can use the car and go wherever she wants but she would pay for the gas," Lizama explained.

The car had been insured and is guaranteed for one year's free maintenance.

Maratita may even own the car by buying it after a year if she opts for it, Lizama said.



NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Miss Marianas Universe 2008 Sorene A. Maratita receives the key to the 2009 model Hyundai Accent from Triple J sales manager Ben Lizama yesterday as part of her prize in the recently held beauty pageant.

This, he said, happened once in 1996, when the pageant winner bought the car after the expiration of her winning prize.

"We're very grateful for Tri-

ple J for its continuing commitment as a partner. This car will be an important aspect in our many community activities and events," Boyer said.

Maratita will be represent-

ing the CNMI in the 2009 Miss Universe and Miss International contests, aside from winning other prizes such as \$1,000 cash and \$1,000 scholarships from Stellar Marianas.

CRIME OF THE WEEK

Stolen gun

Crime Stoppers is seeking the community's assistance for information on any of the person(s) responsible for the recent burglary and theft that occurred at a Dandan residence on Nov. 28, 2008 and was reported at 11:57am. According to pre-

liminary investigation, police learned that an assigned government vehicle was burglarized and a firearm that was assigned to a police officer was stolen from the car. It was also discovered that the car was unlocked and the black waist pouch containing the Smith & Wesson 9mm semi-automatic handgun was missing, along with its magazines and is-

sued ammunition. This case is still under investigation.

Anyone having information about these crimes, call the Crime Stoppers hotline at 234-7272. Crime Stoppers pays cash rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to an arrest. Caller ID is not used. All calls remain anonymous. **(NMI Crime Stoppers)**

Back 2 Basics

The Marianas Cultural Diversity:

"Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?"

December 11, 2008 • 6:30pm-8:30pm
American Memorial Park Auditorium
Lecturer: Dr. Robert Underwood,
President University of Guam
Free Admission

Join Dr. Robert Underwood in a lively discussion about whether the cultural groups in the Marianas are truly melting together (as has been boasted through various marketing and promotional literature) or if they exist separately and within their own subgroups, like the ingredients of a salad bowl.

The community and representatives of local cultural associations and organizations are invited to share their perspectives and experiences after the lecture. Student cultural groups from the local high schools are also invited to participate to share their views.

The event will be streamed live on the internet at www.wethepeoplecnmi.com. For more information please email taroleafgroup@gmail.com.

"From Many, One: Exploring Democracy in a Multi-Cultural Commonwealth"

This project was supported by funding received from the National Endowment for the Humanities and awarded by the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities.

'09 HYUNDAI ACCENT

UP TO 35MPG*
4-Cylinder Engine

Yours for only \$129*
per Paycheck!

5 Year / 60,000 MILE BUMPER-TO-BUMPER WARRANTY

- 1.6 LITER, 4-CYLINDER ENGINE
- AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION
- POWER STEERING & FRONT DISK BRAKES
- POWER WINDOWS
- FRONT AIRBAGS
- 5-STAR DRIVER & FRONT PASSENGER CRASH TEST RATING.

*On approved credit (OAC). Some restrictions apply. Documentation & registration fees not included. This promotion cannot be combined with any other offer & is for a limited time only while current inventories last. See dealer for more details. Sale price of \$15,995.00 less 20% down payment financed at 11.25% A.P.R. for 60 monthly payments of \$279.81 or \$129 per paycheck based on 26 pay periods per year. Total deferred payment is \$16,788.66. **EPA mpg highway fuel economy estimate.

Wen-Pei, Sam-Sam • Sam Sam-Sam
Tel: 234-7131 • Fax: 234-2852 • Beach Rd., Chalan Languan

Wen-Pei, Sam-Sam • Sam Sam-Sam
Tel: 235-505566 • Fax: 234-2326 • Minto Rd., Chalan Kanoa

HYUNDAI

CUC opposes PUC's pre-approval of contracts

Map of aviator Amelia Earhart's disappearance mystery released

Saipan has long been associated with theories surrounding the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. The famous female pilot's attempted flight around the world and the Howland Island destination she failed to reach is depicted on a map of which Saipan figures prominently in many, as yet, unproven theories concerning her fate.

This unusual cartographic presentation combines the flight history, geography, cartography and navigation in presenting various intriguing events leading up to her disappearance in the vicinity of Howland Island and her failed attempt to complete a flight around the world in 1937. The cartography includes inset maps of the western Pacific and the former Japanese Mandated Islands of Saipan, Truk Lagoon, Jaluit Atoll and Howland Island. It includes a polar projection explaining time zones and describes

the method of calculating time Greenwich Mean Time and compass directions.

Map text explains the "announced" and possible "alternate" flight path which, if taken, could have involved an act of

aerial espionage.

Details of the flight and pertinent messages received aboard the U.S. Coast Guard vessel *Itasca* on station to assist her approach to Howland Island are provided along with sketches. This is a very different, detailed chart and technical presentation of events of interest to aviation history buffs, admirers of Earhart and those interested in examining the intricacies of navigation, all shown visually on a single sheet.

For more information contact Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum, 223 North Terrace Street Atchison, Kansas 66002 or e-mail www.ameliaearhartmuseum.org. (PR)



By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. agrees with most of the recommendations made by an outside consulting firm, but the executive director of the utility company feels a pre-review by the Public Utilities Commission of contracts could delay plans for engine rehabilitation.

In a written testimony, CUC executive director Antonio Muña said he agrees with a six-month levelized rate tariff with certain provisions. Currently, CUC sets their rates month to month based on the fluctuating cost of fuel. Muña said he agrees also with reviewing the set rate every six months and keeping the current electric rate in effect.

However, he said he disagrees with Georgetown Consulting

Group's recommendation for PUC pre-approval of contracts.

Muña notes that the utility company has until September 2009, when the contract for the Aggreko emergency generators expires, to rehabilitate the engines at Power Plant 1.

"Securing parts for generators requires lead times as much as six months," he writes. "Imposing a 30-day timeline for pre-review of contracts could jeopardize overhaul completion and other maintenance."

The detailed procurement regulations and confidentiality already slow down the process, Muña said.

"Having said that, we have uncovered, and halted, procurement abuses within that system, and intend to eliminate any other abuses," he added.

PUC commissioners would be "squarely in the path of every repair to [Power Plant

1]," he said. "Is the real issue spending money, or how we spend money—competitive bidding or sole sourcing, for example?"

Gov. Benigno Fitial has submitted a request for \$3.89 million to the Office of Insular Affairs to help pay for the rehabilitation of Power Plant 1. That money, along with \$1.59 million available from other account balances, will provide \$5.48 million for the rehabilitation.

Muña's testimony will be shared during a public hearing on utility rates Friday. CUC's and the Georgetown Consultant's testimony, as well as the public's, will help PUC review and set utility rates before the Dec. 31, 2008, deadline set by law. If the PUC fails to meet this deadline, CUC will be forced to reduce power rates down to 17 cents per kWh.

OPM wants COLA cut for NMI, Guam

The federal Office of Personnel Management is proposing to reduce the cost-of-living allowance for parts of Hawaii, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Under the proposal published Tuesday in a Federal Register notice, OPM wants to reduce COLA by 1 percentage point each.

The COLA for the Hawaiian counties of Honolulu, Kauai, Maui and Kalawao would

drop from 25 percent to 24 percent, as would the COLA for Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The COLA for Hawaii County would drop from 18 to 17 percent.

The notice does not say when the changes will be implemented. OPM will accept comments until Feb. 9.

OPM based its reductions on changes in the relative cost of living for the areas when compared with Washington, D.C. (PR)



BIRTHDAY SHOUT-OUT

Happy birthday greetings to Marie Suzuki. "Thank you for visiting Saipan. You truly have been a blessing to us all." From your friends and family on Saipan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Happy 10th birthday to Jobe Anthony Torres Reyes, who is celebrating his birthday today. "We love you and may God bless you. With lots of love from your families." CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



GUARANTEED PRIZE POOL

\$70,000.00



BLACKJACK CHAMPIONSHIP

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

DECEMBER 13 & 14, 2008

ENTRY FEE: \$1,000

INCLUDES THREE NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION, MEALS, AIRFARE REIMBURSEMENT, EXCLUSIVE COCKTAIL PARTY & REFRESHMENTS!

For a chance to win your share of \$70,000 CASH, contact VIP Services: (670) 328-2285

Bet with your head, not over it

Budget bill sets strict reporting rules

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Government agencies must comply with strict reporting requirements under the appropriation bill passed by the Legislature.

The proposed legislation requires government entities, including autonomous agencies, to submit quarterly reports to the Legislature on their spending for personnel and operations, as well as payments of the

public auditor's fee.

The provision is designed to help the Legislature perform its oversight responsibility.

The public auditor's fee was included in the reporting requirement in the wake of some government agencies' failure to contribute, as required, 1 percent of their appropriation to the operating budget of the Office of the Public Auditor.

According to the Department of Finance, at least \$2

million of assessments against autonomous agencies have remained unpaid. Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos said a system of intercept or offset should be put in place to ensure the assessment against independent agencies are paid.

He also called "archaic and unconventional" the procedure for assessing and accounting for the OPA fee that currently applies to the central government.

"A straightforward proce-

dures would be to appropriate the 1-percent funding requirement for the OPA would be appropriated from general revenues, rather than appropriating the budgetary needs of the individual activities and then deducting 1 percent from those individual appropriations," Inos said.

He noted that the agencies do not get the 1 percent allowance in their budget to cover the OPA assessment.

Tinian clinic gets defibrillator from Red Cross

The American Red Cross-NMI Chapter donated an Automated External Defibrillator, also known as an AED, to the Tinian Health Center last Friday.

Chapter board chair Larry Lee and Health & Safety coordinator Kennedy Benjamin flew into Tinian Friday afternoon to meet with the THC staff and management. There they discussed the unique specifications of the AED to the staff.

The AED is one of several units that the NMI Chapter has donated to various public facilities within the past year. Other facilities include the Saipan International Airport, the Man'amko Center, the CNMI Court House, Managaha Island, the Grotto, Lao Lao Beach and Obyan Beach.

An AED greatly increases a victim's chances of survival when suffering from a cardiac emergency such as a heart attack. Over the years the NMI Chapter has trained thousands of its community members on how to use an AED in hopes of making our islands a safer place to live. (PR)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
American Red Cross board member Arley Long, third from right, Chapter board chair Larry Lee, fourth from right, and Health & Safety coordinator Kennedy Benjamin, fourth from left, donate an AED to THC. They are joined by Fred Hofschneider, acting deputy director of THC, second from right, John Untalan of the Tinian Mayor's Office, far right, and staff of THC.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

December 11, 1998

Officials seek ways to finance deficit

In view of swelling budgetary shortfall that is threatening to thrust the Northern Marianas into its worst financial woes, Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio yesterday said he will convene his financial advisers to draw up ways to wipe out the deficit. However, thinning revenue collections which can hardly meet the funding needs for government operations, make it unlikely for the commonwealth to meet the constitutional requirement to retire the deficit next year. "We have to reserve money to retire our deficit," the governor said in an interview, "This means we will have to continue with our austerity measure and find other revenues to retire this without interrupting essential services provided to the public."

NMC Tinian prepares to transfer

The Northern Marianas College on Tinian will move into a new campus by summer of 1999. The move will not cost anything to the cash-trapped college, but it will offer students a conducive atmosphere for studies. Public Law 10-38 identified \$100,000 for the design and construction of NMC on Tinian. Further lobbying brought the Tinian local officials to appropriate \$250,000 to supplement the original budget. Two hectares of public land was also allocated for NMC situated next to the Tinian High School.

December 11, 2000

For low and middle-income families MPLT threatens to cut housing funds

A lending program by the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation for low- and middle-income families has hit a snag after the Marianas Public Land Trust withheld funds until the end of the year. MPLT trustees warned they may cut the entire \$3.9 million loan extended in October to the housing agency to finance the program if the Legislature fails to amend or act on a legislative initiative it has strongly opposed. In a letter to Rep. Dino M. Jones, chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, they said they have deferred final approval for the release of the money to NMHC, citing House Legislative Initiative 12-3 as main reason for their action.

Two new hotels to rise in Garapan

Two new hotels will rise in the tourist district of Garapan as immediate result of the newly-signed law granting tax breaks to investments in the CNMI, according to a major proponent of the economic incentive program. House Floor Leader Oscar M. Babauta, main sponsor of Public Law 12-32, said these two big projects are expected to boost the islands' economy following more than three years of stagnant growth. One of the new investments will be a floating hotel to be built across from the Kristo Rai church, while the other will be a high-rise hotel on the property across the DFS Galleria that used to be the Samoan housing, he said.

December 11, 2001

Islands' way of life in danger

Government transparency plus public cooperation would go a long way toward mitigating the economic ruin that is staring the CNMI in the face these days. Thus said incoming House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider, even as he rued the fact that a lot of people don't seem to realize yet the extent of the economic decline that is endangering the way of life in the CNMI. "The best public policy that we all can really contribute is to be honest with the people, that the economy is sliding and we need to do something about the continued decline of the economy," said Hofschneider.

NMI's manpower pool shrinking

The CNMI has virtually stopped importing an average of 400 new foreign workers a month since last year, a scenario that paints the Commonwealth's gloomy economic future, according to the US Social Security Administration. Social Security Saipan Field Office Manager Michael G. Newman said that the Commonwealth government may not be able to sustain its operations due to dwindling revenues that resulted from the dramatic slowdown in business activities. "There will be fewer contributions and there will be dramatic effect on the trust fund as people lose their jobs and apply for certain benefits," Newman explained.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Federalization presentation today

The Principles of Democratic Institutions class of Samuel McPhetres at the Northern Marianas College will be conducting a brief presentation about the effects of federalization on local immigration and labor laws and on the different residency status categories in the Commonwealth. The presentation will highlight answers to the frequently asked questions concerning federalization, such as what will happen to the nonresident workforce.

The event, which is open to the public, will be held today, Dec. 11, 2008, at 3:30pm at Room D-1 at the college's campus in As Terlaje. (PR)

Legislative calendar of activities

■ House Standing Committee on Judiciary & Governmental Operations—Committee meeting on Monday, Dec. 15 at 9:30am. For more information, contact JGO Chair Rep. Rosemond Santos at 664-8965.

■ Public hearing on proposed electric rates, Public Utilities Commission—Friday, Dec. 12 at 6pm in the Senate Chamber.

■ Public hearings on House Bills 16-147 (juvenile interrogation); 16-178 (re juvenile justice reform); 16-157 (the Incompetency Determination Act); and 16-158 (the Guardianship Act)—Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 9am in the House Chamber; Wednesday, Dec. 17, 8am-5pm in the Rota Courthouse; and Thursday, Dec 18, 8am-5pm in the Tinian Courthouse. For more informa-

tion contact JGO chair Rep. Rosemond Santos at 664-8965.

Vendors sought for Puengin Inetnon

The Kagman Komunitat Association is looking for interested vendors to sell food, clothing, games, and other types of family oriented entertainment for "Puengin Inetnon."

"Puengin Inetnon" is Chamorro for "a night of gathering."

It will be similar to the Thursday Night Street Market in Garapan except that it will be held every government payday Friday at the Kagman Community Center. Interested vendors, volunteers, and performers may call the Kagman Post Office at 256-POST for more info. (PR)

Kagman High calendar of activities

Dec. 12: JROTC Man'amko Visit
Dec. 16: PTSA at Kagman High School cafeteria. We will connect with Tanapag Elementary School library. Parents/guardians from the northern side of Saipan can come to Tanapag and participate in this meeting via teleconference/polycom from 6pm to 7pm.
Dec. 17: Parent Advisory Committee meeting
Dec. 18: Principals' meeting
Dec. 22: KHS accreditation team meets with BOE/COE
Dec. 23: Christmas 2008 bash at the school campus, 6pm-10pm.
Dec. 24, 2008 to Jan. 4, 2009: Christmas break

Jan. 5, 2009: Classes resume

RP resets overseas absentee voters registration/certification

The Philippine Consulate General would like to inform all the Filipinos in the CNMI that as per Resolution No. 8556, the Philippine Commission on Elections has reset the registration/certification of overseas absentee voters from Dec. 1, 2008 to Feb. 1, 2009, ending on Aug. 31, 2009. All qualified Filipino voters are urged to register as overseas voters or to update their records (if they have previously voted in the Philippines) to enable them to vote during the 2010 Philippine presidential elections. (PR)

Recreational shooting for civilian gun owners

The Department of Public Safety's Firearm Training Facility in As Matuis will be open for all civilian gun owners for test firing and recreational purposes.

Participants will be assessed a \$5 fee for one hour of recreational shooting. Participants may pay the fee at the CNMI Treasury at the Superior Court. Participants must bring with them the receipt and present a valid firearms permit prior to live fire exercise/recreational shooting. The Firearm Training Facility will be open on Dec. 11-13, 2008 from 9am to 3pm. For more information, call Range Master Ambrose T. Ogunoro or Officer David Hosono at 664-9031. (PR)

Joeten's Best Buys of the Week!

December 11, thru December 17, 2008

Department Store

Aluminum Foldable Picnic Table
\$41⁹⁹

Adult Camping Combo Set For 2
\$52⁹⁹

21" Square Wagon Grill with Wooden Trolley
\$48⁹⁹

Springfield Oil Corn 48oz.
\$5⁴⁵

Special V. Vinegar White 1 Gal.
\$3⁹⁹

SUSUPE SHOPPING CENTER
TEL.: 234-6446

THRU SAT. 8:00AM - 9:00PM / SUN. 8:00AM - 7:00PM

DANDAN SUPERMARKET
TEL.: 235-6016

MON. THRU SAT. 8:00AM - 9:00PM

HABA-ADAI SHOPPING CENTER
TEL.: 234-7596

MON. THRU SUN. 8:00AM - 11:00PM

PRICE
COSTCO
SAIPAN

150qrt. Rubbermaid Cooler

Reg. \$149.99

SALE
\$119.99

10x20 Canopy

Reg. \$399.99

SALE
\$319.99

Kool Aid Jammers

10/6.75oz.

BUY 1
GET 1
HALF OFF

SALE BEGINS 12/11/08 AND ENDS 12/17/08

GENUINE PARTS. GENUINE SERVICE. GENUINE PEACE OF MIND.

POWER 65
Battery



As low as \$79.99

Call 234-1179 or Visit Us

Our New Location at Joeten Motors!

Limited offer, while supplies last.



AUTO PARTS

MARIANAS NAPA, INC.

WE SELL PARTS FOR ALL KINDS OF CARS & TRUCKS

JOETEN
ACE
HARDWARE

Christmas Decorations
up to

75% off

25% off Porcelain Houses, Christmas Trees & Toys

JOETEN
ACE
HARDWARE

Come and visit us for more sale! Hurry, while supplies last!

Store Hours: Monday - Saturday 8am - 6pm/Sunday 8am - 5pm

SUSUPE BRANCH
Joeten Shopping Center Beach Road, Susupe
Tel: 234-3117 or 6448 - Fax: 235-7568

GUALO RAI BRANCH
Gualo Rai Commercial Center
Middle Road Tel: 235-9322 - Fax: 235-9325

SAN VICENTE BRANCH
San Vicente Road
Tel: 234-3176 - Fax: 235-0007

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XVIII, Issue No. 346Published daily at 2/F CIC Centre,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950Lynn A. Knight PUBLISHER
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Invest in mass transit: A farsighted way to jolt the economy

Voters sent a clear message to Capitol Hill on Election Day: Even when times are hard, they're willing to pay for mass transit. Nationwide, voters approved over 70 percent of major transportation-funding measures, according to the Center for Transportation Excellence. That's double the rate at which ballot initiatives are generally approved, and it is even more impressive because gas prices were already declining. Transit ridership numbers also continue to grow: From July through September, ridership shot up 6.5 percent compared with the same period last year, the largest such jump in a quarter-century. Lawmakers, who might think there is less urgency to update the nation's public transit system because of cheaper gas, should view the results of Nov. 4, and the growth in ridership, as a call to action for mass transit. A good start would be to make infrastructure improvements a key component of any economic stimulus bill.

In September, the House approved a stimulus bill that set aside about \$18 billion for transportation improvements. While it would have provided a welcome infusion of transportation dollars, the bill, which died in the Senate, was haphazardly crafted. It sought to jump-start ready-to-go transit projects that cash-strapped states had shelved. In theory, this would help mitigate the effects of a severe recession, particularly in the hard-hit construction industry. But it would not reward the best projects, only the ones that were ready to begin. Lawmakers didn't know what kind of projects they were funding, meaning taxpayers could have ended up footing the bill for boondoggles. The legislation also would have neglected mass-transit projects, which are typically complex and may take longer to complete.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials now says there are about 5,000 ready-to-go projects, with a total cost of \$64 billion. But, again, there is scant detail regarding what kind of projects the taxpayers would be funding. As President-elect Barack Obama noted on Sunday, "We are not going to simply write a bunch of checks and let them be spent without some very clear criteria as to how this money is going to benefit the overall economy and put people back to work." That kind of scrutiny should extend to all aspects of the stimulus, including transportation spending.

Lawmakers should give priority to projects that are environmentally friendly and that encourage smart growth. They also should adjust the federal government's disbursement formula to direct more money to mass transit and to other projects in underserved metropolitan areas.

On Saturday, Mr. Obama said, "We will create millions of jobs by making the single largest new investment in our national infrastructure since the creation of the federal highway system in the 1950s." In transportation, the new administration and Congress should work to strike a balance between ready-to-go projects that can jolt the economy and long-term investment in public transit.

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

MARGULIES
© 2008 Jim Margulies

A thousand days left for the Fund?

A prediction was publicly reported that the life of the Retirement Fund's pension program "may be cut short within about three years if the current situation does not improve." Joseph N. Camacho, House Floor Leader, was quoted as saying that the Retirement Fund is facing imminent danger. This is a result of two reasons: the government's failure to meet its legal obligation in making payments of millions of dollars it owes to the Fund and the negative impact on Fund investments resulting from the decline in the stock market—both of which have had a devastating effect on the future financial security of retirees.

Assuming the period of three years is a close estimate, it's only about a thousand days from now if the forecast is reasonably accurate. That's about as close to us in time as Governor Fitial's last election is distant. Not a very long time from the present.

If you're a retiree don't expect the Feds to bail your pension out—the federal government is running out of money as it spends to keep the country out of an economic depression. Besides, the U.S. government doesn't owe Commonwealth pensioners anything, especially since the NMI hasn't contributed a penny to the U.S. Treasury.

To be a retiree and have your pension dry up is bad enough but to have your life insurance and group medical plan evaporate along with it should be another level of serious concern. If there's no pension payment from which to have the monthly group life insurance premiums automatically deducted from one's pension—or for participation in the Fund's privately arranged volunteer health and medical insurance program—that elevates the situation to another level "beyond the pale," with extremely serious consequences for all retirees and their families.

It also means that all the money collected from retirees over the years during which they participated in making premium payments for life insurance will be lost. Future payments for monthly premiums will have to be made individually from financial sources other than one's pension and it's unlikely that everyone will be able to benefit from lower prices resulting from group offerings.

Afterward, for those able to purchase life insurance on their own outside the reduced cost of group offered plans, the price on an individual basis will be huge, even if a company will provide coverage. And there is no guarantee they will. The same is true of health and medical insurance coverage and, even then, if you have a pre-existing medical condition you may not be able to purchase coverage at any price.

Notwithstanding the recent losses in the stock market which few could have foreseen in advance, one wonders what administration officials have been thinking to let the resource base of the Fund deteriorate to the extent it has. It's a callous disregard lacking foresight

By WILLIAM H. STEWART
Special to the Saipan TribuneWilliam H. Stewart is an economist, historian
and military cartographer.

and concern for the health and welfare of those dependent upon their pension.

Depending upon one's age and the private plan selected, the cost of medical and health coverage can run as high as \$600 or \$700 per month in the United States. Policies are probably less expensive in the Philippines but would Commonwealth or Guam health providers honor them? More often than not, such insurance will not cover pre-existing illness such as diabetes.

We know from CNMI health authorities that within the general population 1 in 5 people suffer from diabetes and I assume this ratio holds true for the retirees. Many others have a variety of other different medical problems requiring frequent medical attention. But don't take my word for it; ask a professional at CHC.

If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, a heart condition, ulcers, tuberculosis, epilepsy, emphysema, kidney problems, cancer, high cholesterol (LDL), glaucoma, HIV, Lupus Vulgaris, Lytigo and Bodig, Alzheimers, Parkinson, Hansen, IBS or one of the numerous other illnesses, you probably won't be able to purchase medical insurance to cover your existing condition at a cost you can afford. The bad news will be left to the insurance companies to tell you. Seems to me there might be a whole lot of people in that group. Just make certain that your illnesses are confined to only a common head cold. Then you'll be alright.

With respect to the ineligibility of medical coverage for, say, a prostrate condition, which is quite common among men of retirement age, I'm curious as to whether this condition would be among the classification of SAT (Sorry About That). Probably so.

The clock is ticking and if you are a concerned retiree ask your elected representative what are the plans to deal with the crisis and demand specific answers. Failure to pose such a question can indicate a lack of interest and concern on your part and, if you aren't interested, how can you expect your representative to be?

Historian Thomas Carlyle observed, "It is one of life's illusions, that the present hour is not the critical, decisive time." An interesting observation. The present hour is very critical and a worst-case scenario contingency plan should be worked out and quick.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The Bill of No Rights

With the incredible changes occurring not only on Saipan and the U.S., but everywhere in the world, we thought it would be appropriate to share an interesting Bill of No Rights article that is often attributed to State Representative Mitchell Kaye from Cobb County, GA., but in reality it was written by Lewis Napper, a self-described amateur philosopher from Mississippi who ran for the U.S. Senate seat in 2000 as a Libertarian.

President-elect Obama is leading the charge to stimulate the economy, but he predicts that it's going to get worse before it gets better. While some are sticking their hands out for more funding, the sad truth is that less money will be available to those living on the dole.

This bill will be funny to those people who do not have an entitlement mindset, and it may be offensive to others who feel it is talking to or about them. However, it does offer some gems of wisdom that are worth reading. Here is the Bill of No Rights:

We, the sensible people of the United States, in an attempt to help everyone get along, restore some semblance of justice, avoid any more riots, keep our nation safe, promote positive behavior and secure the blessings of debt-free liberty to ourselves and our great-great-grandchildren, hereby try one more time to ordain and establish some common sense guidelines for the terminally whiny, guilt-ridden, delusional and other liberal, bed-wetters. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that whole lots of people were confused by the Bill of Rights and are so dim that they require a Bill of No Rights.

ARTICLE I: You do not have the right to a new car, big screen TV or any other form of wealth. More power to you if you can legally

acquire them, but no one is guaranteeing anything.

ARTICLE II: You do not have the right to never be offended. This country is based on freedom, and that means freedom for everyone—not just you! You may leave the room, turn the channel, express a different opinion, etc., but the world is full of idiots, and probably always will be.

ARTICLE III: You do not have the right to be free from harm. If you stick a screwdriver in your eye, learn to be more careful, do not expect the tool manufacturer to make you and all your relatives independently wealthy.

ARTICLE IV: You do not have the right to free food and housing. Americans are the most charitable people to be found, and will gladly help anyone in need, but we are quickly growing weary of subsidizing generation after generation of professional couch potatoes who achieve nothing more than the creation of another generation of professional couch potatoes.

ARTICLE V: You do not have the right to free health care. That would be nice, but from the looks of public housing, we're just not interested in health care.

ARTICLE VI: You do not have the right to physically harm other people. If you kidnap, rape, intentionally maim or kill someone, don't be surprised if the rest of us want to see you fry in the electric chair.

ARTICLE VII: You do not have the right to the possessions of others. If you rob, cheat or coerce away the goods or services of other citizens, don't be surprised if the rest of us get together and lock you away in a place where you still won't have the right to a big-screen color TV or a life of leisure.

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS
Special to the Saipan Tribune



Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC (www.bizresults.org). They can be contacted at biz_results@yahoo.com.

ARTICLE VIII: You don't have the right to demand that our children risk their lives in foreign wars to soothe your aching conscience. We hate oppressive governments and won't lift a finger to stop you from going to fight if you'd like. However, we do not enjoy parenting the entire world and do not want to spend so much of our time battling each and every little tyrant with a military uniform and a funny hat.

ARTICLE IX: You don't have the right to a job. All of us sure want all of you to have one, and will gladly help you along in hard times, but we expect you to take advantage of the opportunities of education and vocational training laid before you to make yourself useful.

ARTICLE X: You do not have the right to happiness. Being an American means that you have the right to pursue happiness—which by the way, is a lot easier if you are unencumbered by an overabundance of idiotic laws created by those of you who were confused by the Bill of Rights.

Muslims as India's new 'Untouchables'

The news of the attacks in Mumbai eerily took me back to a quiet morning two years ago when I sat in Room 721 of the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower hotel, reading the morning newspaper, fearing just the kind of violence that has now exploded in the city of my birth. The headlines recounted how the socioeconomic condition of the people of my ancestry, Muslims in India, had fallen below that of the Hindu caste traditionally called "untouchables," according to a government report.

"Muslims are India's new untouchables," I said sadly to my mother, in the room with me. "India is going to explode if it doesn't take care of them." Now, indeed, alas it has. And shattered in the process is the myth of India's thriving secular democracy.

Mumbai police said over the weekend that the only gunman they'd captured during the attacks—which left nearly 200 dead and more than 300 wounded—claimed to belong to a Pakistani militant group. But even if the trouble was imported, the violence will most certainly turn a spotlight of suspicion on Muslims in India. Already, my relatives are hunkered down for a sectarian backlash they expect from anti-terrorism agencies, police and angry Hindu fundamentalists.

India, long championed as a model of pluralism, used to be an example of how Muslims can coexist and thrive even as a minority population. My extended family prospered as part of an educated, middle class. My parents, who settled in the United States in the 1960s when my father pursued a doctorate at Rutgers University, were part of India's successful diaspora. I love India, and on that trip, I wanted to show it off to my son, Shibli, then age 4.

But on that visit, across India from Mumbai to the southern state of Tamil Nadu and north to Lucknow, the hub of Muslim culture, I was deeply saddened. Talking to vegetable vendors, artisans and businessmen, I heard about how the condition of Muslims had deteriorated. They had become largely disenfranchised, poor, jobless and uneducated. Their tales echoed those I'd heard on previous trips,

when my extended family recounted their humiliating experiences with bureaucratic, housing, job and educational discrimination.

Indeed, the government report I read about in the newspapers two years ago acknowledged that Muslims in India had become "backward." "Fearing for their security," the report said, "Muslims are increasingly resorting to living in ghettos around the country." Branding of Muslims as anti-national, terrorists and agents of Pakistan "has a depressing effect on their psyche," the report said, noting Muslims live in "a sense of despair and suspicion."

According to the report, produced by a committee led by a former Indian chief justice, Rajender Sachar, Muslims were now worse off than the Dalit caste, or those called untouchables. Some 52 percent of Muslim men were unemployed, compared with 47 percent of Dalit men. Among Muslim women, 91 percent were unemployed, compared with 77 percent of Dalit women. Almost half of Muslims over the age of 46 couldn't read or write. While making up 11 percent of the population, Muslims accounted for 40 percent of India's prison population. Meanwhile, they held less than 5 percent of government jobs.

The Sachar committee report recommended creating a commission to remedy the systemic discrimination and promote affirmative-action programs. So far, very few of the recommendations have been put in place.

Since reading the report, I have feared that Islamic militancy would be born out of such despair. Even if last week's terrorist plot was hatched outside India, a cycle of sectarian violence could break out in the country and push some disenfranchised Muslim youth to join militant groups using hot-button issues like Israel and Kashmir as inspiration.

What has irked me these last years is how the world has glossed over India's problems. In 2006, for instance, former U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen, whose Cohen Group invests heavily in India, said the U.S. and India were "perfect partners" because

By ASRA Q. NOMANI
Special to the Los Angeles Times



Nomani is the author of *Standing Alone: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam*.

of their "multiethnic and secular democracies." When I asked to interview Cohen about the socioeconomic condition of Muslims, his public relations staffer said that conversation was too "in the weeds." But, to me, the condition of Muslims needs frank and open discussion if there is to be any hope of stemming Islamic radicalism and realizing true secular democracy in the country.

India's 150 million Muslims represent the second-largest Muslim population in the world, smaller only than Indonesia's 190 million Muslims. That is just bigger than Pakistan's 140 million Muslims or the entire population of Arab Muslims, which numbers about 140 million. U.S. intelligence reports continually warn that economic, social and political discontent are catalysts for radicalism, so we would be naive to continue to ignore this potential threat to the national security of not just India but the United States.

Throughout my 2006 journey, I found the idea of India's potential for danger unavoidable. On one leg, my son tucked safely in bed with my mother in our Taj hotel room, I went out to watch the filming of "A Mighty Heart," the movie about the murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl by Muslim militants in Pakistan. When the location scouts needed to replicate the treacherous streets of Karachi's militant Islamist culture, they didn't have to go far. They found the perfect spot in a poor Muslim neighborhood of Mumbai.

CUC gobbledygook: Part V

CUC says it will now disconnect PSS due to past due billings. CUC maintains the past due is still over \$1 million but PSS now says they have "settled" on \$414,000. What's the *real* number, please?

CUC also states that "disconnection will not be up to CUC..." but will be the result of "urgent actions" taken by Mobil, Telesource, Aggreko, PMIC and Shell. Will somebody please tell me what these "urgent actions" are and explain how these businesses are to blame? Perhaps we'll see the CEOs and presidents of these businesses climbing the poles to pull the plugs?

And best of all, please explain this one: Georgetown Consultant's report indicated CUC's accounts receivable at \$31.2 million; \$9.6 million of that from government agencies. OK, we know that, but Mr. Muña stated day before yesterday, "The CNMI central government is now current in its utility payments." Wow! *Where* did the central government suddenly get \$9.6 million to bring its accounts current? Or perhaps Mr. Muña does not consider "government agencies" a part of the "central government"; which causes me to wonder what is the "central government" if not made up of all its various "agencies?"

Perhaps there is a silver lining after all: If CUC manages to disconnect *all* of its past due accounts, as the Governor has apparently instructed, there will be so little power consumption left that we won't need the power of Aggreko or PMIC and could nicely supply the remaining customers with only one engine at Power Plant 1. Not a very enticing solution when compared with what simple "good management" could do.

There are so many conflicting "stories" being bandied about from so many in the "central government" that it's nearly impossible to keep a score card, much less know who's telling the truth, if *anyone* is!

And did anyone notice the recent flip-flop on Aggreko? When asking for the money six months ago, it was "we will not require those services for more than a year" to (this week) "it looks like we'll probably have to extend [Aggreko] at least another six months." Why, when only five months ago CUC had "plenty of time" to make the necessary repairs to PP1? Well, it so happens that fully one third of the time has slipped away and CUC has yet to even decide what its next step should be, let alone *take* a step!

I'll leave the rest for you to work on...but I'm pretty sure part

VI of this series will not be far off.

Dr. Thomas D. Arkle Jr.
San Jose, Tinian

Where is Saipan?






As a retired U.S. Navy veteran I am very concerned about the upcoming federal takeover of immigration on Saipan. I have recently been in contact with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and Tri-care (military healthcare) to make important changes to my accounts. These federal agencies do not recognize Saipan's zip code in their online databases. My concern is, if they do not know where Saipan is, how many of the mainland federal lawmakers also do not know where Saipan is?

Charles A. George
Chalan Kanoa, Saipan

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
				
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲85° ▼76°	▲85° ▼77°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼77°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲82 ▼76
Palau	Showers	▲89 ▼78
Yap	Showers	▲88 ▼76
Chuuk	Partly Sunny	▲88 ▼78
Pohnpei	Cloudy	▲87 ▼75
Kosrae	Mostly Sunny	▲88 ▼76
Majuro	Showers	▲84 ▼76

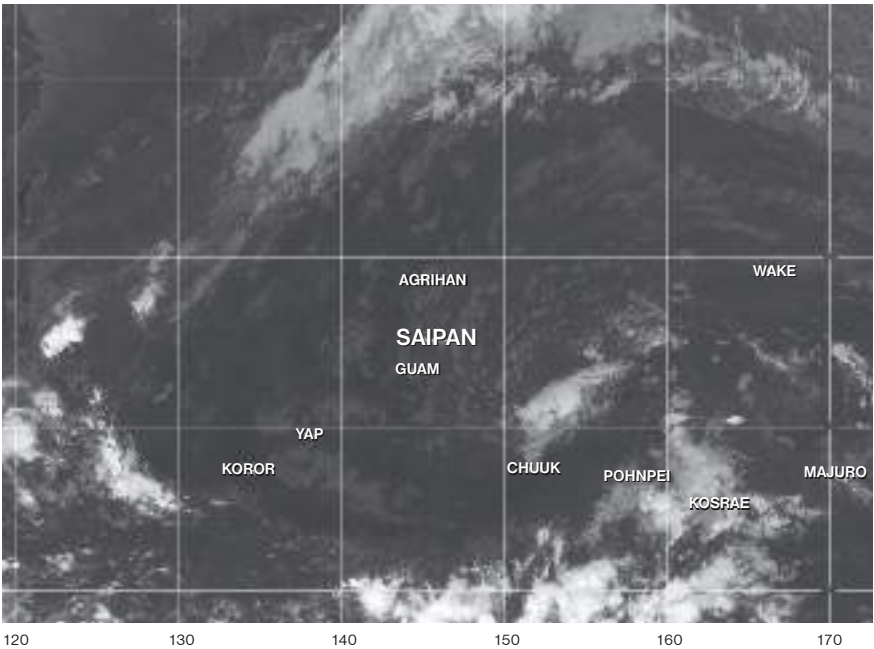
Around The Globe

Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	▲69 ▼58
Beijing	Sunny	▲42 ▼28
Hong Kong	Partly Sunny	▲73 ▼65
Honolulu	Rain	▲81 ▼70
London	Rain/Snow	▲39 ▼34
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲80 ▼50
Manila	Showers	▲88 ▼72
Melbourne	Cloudy	▲75 ▼61
Miami	Thunderstorms	▲82 ▼66
New York	Showers	▲39 ▼32
Osaka	Cloudy	▲59 ▼40
Paris	Dreary	▲37 ▼33
Pusan	Partly Sunny	▲54 ▼32
Rome	Rain	▲59 ▼49
Salem	Mostly Sunny	▲50 ▼38
San Francisco	Partly Sunny	▲65 ▼45
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲38 ▼26
Tokyo	Partly Sunny	▲60 ▼45
Washington, DC	Rain	▲41 ▼32

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
12:04AM Today	Low Tide:	0.5 Feet
7:10AM Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
12:11PM Today	Low Tide:	1.2 Feet
5:19PM Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10, 2008
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 400 miles northwest of a shear line running from 16N130E to 25N140E. This shear line is well northwest of the Marianas and Yap. A circulation centered north of Chuuk at 11N153E is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms within 100 miles of the circulation center. A near-equatorial trough runs from west of 2N130E to about 2N156E to EQ159E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found south of the trough to south of the equator between 153E and 159E and in convergent flow east of the trough between the equator and 1N from 161E to 164E. These areas are south of Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae. A dissipating circulation has left residual scattered showers and a few thunderstorms east southeast and south of Pohnpei between 4N and 5N from 158E to 166E and within 70 miles of a line running from 5N162E to 8N161E.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:33AM	5:48 PM
Friday	6:33AM	5:48 PM
Saturday	6:34AM	5:48 PM
Sunday	6:35AM	5:49 PM
Monday	6:35AM	5:49 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	4:11PM	4:36 AM
Friday	5:14PM	5:44 AM
Saturday	6:22PM	6:52 AM
Sunday	7:31PM	7:58 AM
Monday	8:37PM	8:57 AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

- PICTURES**
 - ISLAND SNAPSHOTS Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
 - BIRTHDAY GREETINGS A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
 - BUSINESS Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
 - SAMU'T SARI Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
 - TRAVELOGUE Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.
- ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - COMMUNITY BRIEFS

- Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

- For pictures:**
 - Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
 - Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
 - Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
 - For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.
- For announcements:**
 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

- the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Sunday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of \$182. Off-island subscription rate is \$376 per year. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2008

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
Saipan-Rota CO9597 11:50am 12:25pm 1,7	Rota-Saipan CO 9598 3:25am 4:00am 5,6
Saipan-Guam CO9317 5:00am 5:50am Daily CO9313 8:30am 9:20am Daily CO9597 11:50am 1:20pm 1,7 via Rota CO9601 12:30pm 1:20pm 2,3,4,5,6 CO9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily CO9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily CO9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily	Guam-Saipan CO 9316 2:30am 3:20am 1,2,3,4,7 CO9598 2:30am 4:00am 5,6 via Rota CO9596 7:00am 7:50am Daily CO9600 10:20am 11:10am Daily CO9602 2:00pm 2:50pm Daily CO9604 5:00pm 5:50pm Daily CO9606 8:00pm 8:50pm Daily
Saipan-Narita NW 099 5:00am 7:40am Daily NW 078 8:25am 1:30pm 2,3,4,5,6,7 NW 075 4:55pm 7:30pm Daily	Narita-Saipan NW 076 10:15am 2:40pm Daily NW 077 6:25pm 1:25am+1 2,3,4,5,6,7 NW 100 8:45pm 1:15am+1 Daily
Saipan-Osaka NW 083 4:30pm 7:20pm Daily	Osaka-Saipan NW 084 10:40am 3:10pm Daily
Saipan-Nagoya NW 078 8:25am 11:05am Daily	Nagoya-Saipan NW 077 9:00pm 1:25am+1 Daily
Saipan-Incheon OZ 604 2:10am 6:00am 1 OZ 604 2:40am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7 OZ 606 3:20pm 7:00pm Daily	Incheon-Saipan OZ 605 9:00am 2:20pm Daily OZ 603 7:40pm 1:00am+1 7 OZ 603 8:10pm 1:30am+1 1,2,3,4,5,6
Saipan-Busan OZ 608 3:50am 7:20am 1,4,5,7	Busan-Saipan OZ 607 9:30pm 2:40am+1 3,4,6,7
Saipan-Shanghai FM 844 2:50am 5:40am 2,6	Shanghai-Saipan FM 843 7:15pm 1:50am+1 1,5
Rota-Guam CO 9597 12:50pm 1:20pm 1,7	Guam-Rota CO 9598 2:30am 3:00am 5,6
Guam-Manila CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 3,5 via Koror CO 933 8:00pm 9:40pm Daily PR 111 6:00am 7:50am 1,2,4,6,7	Manila-Guam CO 892 10:10pm 5:30am+1 3,5 via Koror CO 934 11:10pm 4:40am+1 Daily PR 110 10:10pm 4:00am+1 1,3,5,6,7
Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)	

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100 7:00am 7:30am Daily				FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100 7:50am 8:20am Daily				FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:00am 9:30am Daily				FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:50am 10:15am Daily				Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
Guam-Rota				FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 400 6:45pm 7:15pm Daily				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 101 6:45am 6:55am Daily				FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 103 7:30am 7:40am Daily				FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 105 8:00am 8:10am Daily				FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 107 8:40am 8:50am Daily				FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 109* 9:10am 9:20am Daily							
FRE 111* 10:45am 10:55am Daily							



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Business

Deal seems near, but talks on auto bailout drag on

WASHINGTON (AP)—Weary Democratic congressional leaders pushed to clear the final obstacles to a \$15 billion bailout of U.S. automakers Tuesday night, but the rescue plan faced new snags as Republicans raised deep concerns.

Top Democrats said they were still hopeful of a deal by the end of the night—with a vote to follow by the end of the week—though significant sticking points remained. Still unresolved were the precise requirements to be placed on carmakers by a new “car czar” who would be named by President George W. Bush and could ultimately force the carmakers to reinvent themselves.

Republicans also were demanding—so far unsuccessfully—that Democrats scrap language that would force the carmakers to drop lawsuits challenging tough emissions limits in California and other states.

Still, leading Democrats voiced optimism that a deal would emerge.

“There do not appear to me to be differences in principle of a sufficient nature to blow this thing up,” Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., the Financial Services Committee chairman, told reporters. Earlier, he privately briefed House Democrats on the emerging deal and expected agreement by day’s end.

Democrats and White House officials hammered out legislative



Auto workers gather outside the Potamkin auto dealership to express support of a federal aid package for failing automakers, during a rally in New York, Dec. 8, 2008.

Ford execs say company differs from US competition

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP)—By shunning government loans, Ford Motor Co.’s top executives say they hope to buff up the automaker’s image and set it apart from its cash-starved Detroit competitors, General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC.

GM and Chrysler are in desperate need of government money and may not last until the end of the year without it. But Ford set up \$23.5 billion worth of credit back in 2006, and both

Chief Executive Alan Mulally and Executive Chairman Bill Ford Jr. told The Associated Press Tuesday they are confident that the borrowing, coupled with restructuring and new product plans, will get them through the recession without relying on the government.

Ford even said the century-old company that bears his family’s name might be able to use the independence from loans to its advantage.

“I think if they see Ford as a company trying to pull itself up by its own bootstraps, and making it on its own and pulling the right levers, I think that could be a positive for us,” Ford said.

Mulally said Ford has completed much of the restructuring that Congress is demanding of the other two, slimming down its brands by selling Jaguar, Land Rover and Aston Martin and studying the sale of Sweden’s Volvo.

Lawmakers blast former Fannie, Freddie execs

WASHINGTON (AP)—Three months after the government seized control of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, lawmakers on Tuesday blamed former top executives at the mortgage giants for fueling the financial market turmoil that has dragged the country into a recession.

And the housing fallout continues. The National Association of Realtors’ index of

pending U.S. home sales beat expectations in October—but deeply discounted foreclosures and distressed sales accounted for nearly half the deals.

On Wall Street, stocks fell after a two-day rally as downbeat corporate news reminded investors that the economy’s troubles won’t soon ease. The Dow Jones industrials fell nearly 243 points, while broader indexes showed

more moderate declines.

Seeking the safety of government securities, investors drove demand for ultra-safe Treasury bills so high Tuesday that they were willing to earn no interest on their investments at a Treasury Department auction. Interest rates on four-week Treasury bills slid to zero from 0.04 percent a week earlier.

At the same time, Congress and

the White House pushed to clear the final obstacles to a \$15 billion bailout of the auto industry.

Internal e-mails and other documents released by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee show that former Fannie Mae CEO Daniel Mudd and former Freddie Mac CEO Richard Syron disregarded recommendations that they avoid riskier types of loans.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Point of no return: Interest on T-bills hits zero

NEW YORK (AP)—Investors are so nervous they’re willing to accept the same return from government debt that they’d get from burying money in a coffee can—zero. The Treasury Department said Tuesday it had sold \$30 billion in four-week bills at an interest rate of zero percent, the first time that’s happened since the government began issuing the notes in 2001. And when investors traded their T-bills with each other, the yield sometimes went negative. That’s how extreme the market anxiety is: Some are willing to give up a little of their money just to park it in a relatively safe place. “No one wants to run the risk of any accidents,” said

Lou Crandall, chief economist at Wrightson ICAP, a research company that specializes in government finance. At last week’s government auction of the four-week bills, the interest rate was a slightly higher but still paltry 0.04 percent. Three-month T-bills auctioned by the government on Monday paid poorly, too—0.005 percent.

Oil rises above \$43 as investors await OPEC cut

SINGAPORE (AP)—Oil prices rose above \$43 a barrel Wednesday in Asia as investors looked to an expected OPEC production cut next week to help stabilize prices that have plummeted amid a global economic slowdown. Light, sweet crude for January delivery was

up \$1.21 to \$43.28 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange by midday in Singapore. The contract fell overnight \$1.64 to settle at \$42.07. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which accounts for about 40 percent of global crude supply, has signaled it plans to reduce output quotas at a meeting Dec. 17 in Algeria. Investors expect OPEC to slash production by at least 1.5 million barrels a day, matching the group’s cut in October.

China urges airlines to cancel, delay plane orders

BEIJING (AP)—China is urging its troubled state-owned airlines to cancel or defer new aircraft purchases amid the

global economic turmoil—a move that could hurt American and European aircraft makers. Airlines are also being urged not to renew leases for aircraft rented from foreign firms and to ground or sell some planes, according to an announcement seen Wednesday on the Web site of industry regulator the Civil Aviation Administration of China. No new airlines will be approved for operation before at least 2010 and carriers should switch passenger service to freight where applicable and retire larger numbers of old aircraft, the administration said. “From the second half of this year, the global economic crisis has had an increasingly negative effect on the development of our civil aviation industry,” the administration said.

language behind the scenes.

Even if they strike a deal, though, conservative Republicans who want to force one or more of the Big Three into bankruptcy warned they might try to block the measure, virtually guaranteeing that it will need a 60-vote majority to pass and possibly delaying approval for days.

“I think that not only myself, but several of us will be looking at possibly blocking this package,” Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., told CNBC.

The core of the bill—and its aim—was not in dispute among the White House and Democratic leaders. It would provide emergency loans to two of Detroit’s Big Three—Ford Motor Co. has said it doesn’t need an immediate cash transfusion—and create the presidentially named “car czar.” The federal overseer would supervise a broad industry restructuring and would be empowered to pull the money back if the carmakers weren’t doing enough to ensure their own survival.

All the while, the nation has fallen into recession, Congress and the presidency are both in transition, Wall Street is ricocheting daily and the Federal Reserve and Bush Treasury Department are fighting to steady the reeling financial industry.

A final deal hinged on only a couple of outstanding issues, said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Asian markets rise as Congress nears auto deal

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Asian markets shrugged off negative economic news to rise Wednesday, underpinned by continued faith in government measures to boost flagging economies as Congress neared a deal to rescue ailing U.S. automakers.

Japan’s benchmark Nikkei 225 stock average rose 238.60 points, or 2.8 percent, to 8,634.47 and Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index advanced 525.45 points, or 3.6 percent, to 15,278.67.

Benchmark indexes in Australia, South Korea, India, Shanghai and Singapore also rose. New Zealand’s market ended down.

“Certainly, it looks like this is a bear market rally and it could continue for awhile,” said Mark Tan of UOB Asset Management in Singapore, referring to recent gains as a temporary respite in an overall market downtrend.

Stocks in Tokyo advanced despite data showing that core machinery orders, a key barometer of corporate capital spending, fell 4.4 percent in October, indicating that business investment was retreating sharply amid the global slump.

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA
3,573.30
Up 39.60
(+1.12%)

HONG KONG
15,366.77
Up 613.55
(+4.16%)

TOKYO
8,660.24
Up 264.37
(+3.15%)

MANILA
1,938.82
Up 3.75
(+0.19%)

SEOUL
1,145.87
Up 40.03
(+3.62%)

JAKARTA
1,299.76
Up 33.64
(+2.51%)

K. LUMPUR
843.33
Up 13.16
(+1.58%)

SINGAPORE
2,811.55
Up 56.97
(+2.03%)

BANGKOK
423.79
Up 13.21
(+3.22%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW
8,691.33
-2.72%

S&P
888.67
-2.31%

NASDAQ
1,547.34
-1.55%

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.5125
British Pound	0.6737
Canadian Dollar	1.2510
Chinese Yuan	6.8662
Euro	0.7701
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7506
Indian Rupee	49.120
Indonesian Rupiah	10,950.0000
Japanese Yen	92.7450
Malaysian Ringgit	3.6133
New Zealand Dollar	1.8248
Philippine Peso	48.1450
Singapore Dollar	1.5018
South Korean Won	1,430.3000
Swiss Franc	1.2005
Taiwan Dollar	33.4460
Thailand Baht	35.4300

In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Nation

ACROSS THE NATION

Alaska governor's office sent suspicious powder

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP)—An eighth letter containing suspicious powder and addressed to a governor's office was intercepted in Alaska on Tuesday, and it bore a Texas postmark like suspicious mailings to other governors this week, officials said. A spokeswoman for Gov. Sarah Palin said the letter was received Tuesday in Juneau at a mailroom about a block from the Capitol, and it was addressed to Palin's predecessor Gov. Frank Murkowski, who left office two years ago. Palin spokeswoman Sharon Leighow said the letter came from Texas, but she didn't know which city. Seven suspicious letters to governors' offices received this week bore Dallas postmarks, the FBI said Tuesday. And while those seven letters were determined to contain harmless powder, results of tests on the Alaska letter were pending Tuesday night, the FBI office in Anchorage said.

NJ commission says state should allow gay marriage

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP)—A commission has concluded that New Jersey legislators should allow gay couples to marry, setting up what could be a spirited debate over whether the state should be the first to allow gay marriage by passing a law, rather than by court mandate. In its final report, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, the state's Civil Union Review Commission concluded that the state's two-year-old civil union law doesn't do enough to give gay couples the same protections as heterosexual married couples. "This commission finds that the separate categorization established by the Civil Union Act invites and encourages unequal treatment of same-sex couples and their children," the report says. The findings of the commission's 13 members were unanimous. The commission found that the rights afforded to those in civil unions were not always well understood, and that allowing gay couples to marry would alleviate the problem. For example, there have been instances when people in civil unions have been prevented from visiting their partners in hospitals and making medical decisions on their behalf, the commission found.

Homicide probe opened in apparent NYC bias crime

NEWYORK (AP)—Authorities opened a homicide investigation Tuesday into a vicious attack on an Ecuadorean immigrant whose assailants shouted anti-gay and anti-Hispanic slurs, then beat him with a baseball bat and kicked him. Jose Sucuzhanay, 31, was attacked early Sunday as he walked arm in arm with his 38-year-old brother in Brooklyn. He had been listed in critical condition after undergoing brain surgery at Elmhurst Hospital in neighboring Queens. A law enforcement official told The Associated Press that Sucuzhanay had been declared brain dead and was taken off life support Tuesday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing. Relatives, though, held a news conference to say that Sucuzhanay was clinging to life and that the family had an important decision to make.

Ill. governor charged in Obama successor probe

CHICAGO (AP)—Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was roused from bed and arrested Tuesday after prosecutors said he was caught on wiretaps audaciously scheming to sell Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat for cash or a plum job for himself in the new administration.

"I've got this thing and it's (expletive) golden," the 51-year-old Democrat said of his authority to appoint Obama's replacement, "and I'm just not giving it up for (expletive) nothing. I'm not gonna do it."

Prosecutors did not accuse Obama himself of any wrongdoing or even knowing about the matter. The president-elect said: "I had no contact with the governor or his office, and so I was not aware of what was happening."

FBI agents arrested the governor before daybreak at his Chicago home and took him away while his family was still asleep, saying the wiretaps convinced them that Blagojevich's "political corruption crime spree" had to be stopped before it was too late.

"The Senate seat, as recently as days ago, seemed to be on the verge of being auctioned off," U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said. "The conduct would make Lincoln roll over in his grave."

Federal investigators bugged the governor's campaign offices and tapped his home phone, capturing conversations laced with profanity and tough-guy talk from the governor. Chicago FBI chief Robert Grant said even seasoned investigators were stunned by what they heard, particularly since the governor had known for at least three years he was under investigation for alleged hiring fraud and clearly realized agents might be listening in.

The FBI said in court papers that the governor was overheard conspiring to sell the Senate seat for campaign cash or lucrative jobs for himself or his wife, Patti, a real estate agent. He spoke of using the Senate appointment to land a job with a nonprofit foundation or a union-affiliated group, and even held out hope of getting appointed as Obama's secretary of health and human services or an ambassador.

Records sought on type of fighter jet that killed 4

SAN DIEGO (AP)—A high-ranking congressman called on the Marine Corps on Tuesday to release the maintenance records of all fighter jets of the type that lost power and crashed into a San Diego neighborhood, killing four members of a family.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, the ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said the fiery crash Monday of the F/A-18D Hornet fighter as it approached Marine Corps Air Station Miramar was apparently caused by power failure.

"My understanding ... is that the engines failed, causing the aircraft to lose thrust," said Hunter spokesman Joe Kasper.

The crash was probably unrelated to the previous discovery of cracks in hinges on the wings of more than a dozen of the \$57 million aircraft, the



In this June 20, 2005 file photo, Gov. Rod Blagojevich, D-Ill., speaks as Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., listens during a news conference in St. Louis. Federal authorities arrested Blagojevich Tuesday Dec. 9, 2008 on charges that he brazenly conspired to sell or trade the U.S. Senate seat left vacant by President-elect Barack Obama to the highest bidder.

Obama works to distance himself from Ill. governor

WASHINGTON (AP)—Though Barack Obama isn't accused of anything, the charges against his home-state governor—concerning Obama's own Senate seat no less—are an unwelcome distraction. And the ultimate fallout is unclear.

As Obama works to set up his new administration and deal with a national economic crisis, suddenly he also is spending time and attention trying to distance himself from Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and charges that the governor was trying to sell the now-vacant Senate post.

The president-elect was blunt and brief in addressing the case on Tuesday: "I had no contact with the governor or his office, and so I was not aware of what was happening" concerning any possible dealing about Blagojevich's appointment of a successor.

It's Obama's first big headache since his election last month, and Republicans were anything but eager to let it go away.

Said Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia, the new GOP House whip: "The serious nature of the crimes listed by federal prosecutors raises questions about the interaction with Gov.

Blagojevich, President-elect Obama and other high ranking officials who will be working for the future president."

Added Robert M. "Mike" Duncan, chairman of the Republican National Committee: "Americans expect strong leadership, but President-elect Barack Obama's comments on the matter are insufficient at best."

In Chicago, U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said prosecutors were making "no allegations" that Obama was aware of any scheming.

And Blagojevich himself, in taped conversations cited by prosecutors, suggested that Obama wouldn't be helpful to him. Even if the governor was to appoint a candidate favored by the Obama team, Blagojevich said, "they're not willing to give me anything except appreciation."

The two Illinois politicians have never been especially close and have largely operated in different Democratic Party camps in the state. Blagojevich's disdain for Obama was clear in court documents; he is quoted as calling the president-elect a vulgar term in one phone conversation recorded by the FBI.

Workers win a big round in Chicago factory sit-in

CHICAGO (AP)—The creditor of a Chicago plant where laid-off employees are conducting a sit-in to demand severance pay said Tuesday it would extend loans to the factory so it could resolve the dispute, though the workers declared their protest unfinished.

A resolution seemed nearer as Bank of America, which yanked the plant's financing last week, announced it sent a letter to Republic Windows and Doors offering "a limited amount of additional loans" to resolve its employee claims.

But the United Electrical Workers union, which represents the Republic workers, said late Tuesday that no final agreement has been reached and that there are still important details to be worked out before that can happen. Negotiations were to resume Wednesday.

About 200 of the 240 laid-off work-

ers had responded to their three days' notice of the plant closing by staging a sit-in and vowing to stay put until assurances they would get severance and accrued vacation pay.

Lawmakers have criticized Bank of America for cutting off money to the plant after it exhausted its credit line, even though the Charlotte, N.C.-based bank itself received \$25 billion from the government's financial bailout package.

Word of Bank of America's loan offer came as the bank, union representatives and Republic held talks in Chicago on the fifth day of the sit-in.

Union organizer Leah Fried said it was too soon to know whether the sit-in would end soon. Workers would have to vote to end the action, but she said there was no such deal as of Tuesday night.

Asia

India gives info tying Mumbai gunmen to Pakistan

MUMBAI, India (AP)—Police released names and photographs of suspected Islamic militants who staged the bloody three-day siege of Mumbai and said they uncovered new details about the gunmen—including hometowns in Pakistan.

The new information, if confirmed, would bolster India's claim that the attack was launched from Pakistan and was released as the Pakistani government announced more arrests in raids on Lashkar-e-Taiba, the militant group that India blames for the assault on its financial capital.

Indian officials maintained a skeptical silence about the reported crackdown and arrest of an alleged mastermind of the Mumbai assault, which killed 171 people, raised fears of war between the nuclear-armed neighbors and eroded U.S. hopes for a regional push against al-Qaida and other extremists.

Mumbai's chief police investigator, Rakesh Maria, showed photographs of eight of the nine slain attackers—some from identity cards, but three were gruesome pictures of maimed faces. The body of the ninth was too badly burned, he said. The 10th gunman, previously identified as Mohammed



People pay tribute to those killed in recent terror attacks in Mumbai as they take out a procession in Allahabad, India, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2008.

Ajmal Kasab, was captured alive.

Maria said all 10 attackers were from Pakistan, most of them Punjab province, and were between the ages of 20 and 28. He did not say how police had tracked down their hometowns, although they have been interrogating the lone surviving gunman.

The attackers, who apparently landed by boat on the Mumbai coast the night of Nov. 26, were led by Ismail Khan, 25, Maria said, describing him as a battle-hardened Lashkar veteran. The picture released shows a broad-shouldered man with a square, determined face.

As they split up to attack different targets, Khan went with Kasab to a crowded train station where they emptied assault rifles at the helpless passengers before escaping out the back.

Sebastian D'Souza, a journalist who followed them, taking pictures, described the pair as "backpackers with assault rifles."

"They were firing from their hips. Very professional. Very cool," D'Souza told The Associated Press after the attack.

Khan was eventually shot dead and Kasab captured, but not before they had killed the head of Mumbai's Anti-Terror Force and several other officers.

Greenpeace tries softer anti-whaling approach

TOKYO (AP)—Environmentalists in the icy seas, risking life and limb to save whales from the harpoons of Japanese hunters—it makes for good headlines in the West and has even spawned a TV series, "Whale Wars."

But such efforts by environmental groups like Greenpeace have done nothing to slow Japan's annual whale hunt, which kills about 1,000 a year.

So the organization is taking a softer approach to its anti-whaling campaign in Japan, where many don't approve of protests and civil disruption.

Japan's whaling fleet left last

month for its annual hunt in the Antarctic Ocean, but for the first time in years no Greenpeace vessels were in pursuit.

At a subdued event in Tokyo on Tuesday, directors from Greenpeace offices worldwide gathered to protest Japan's continued whale hunts and the treatment of two of its anti-whaling activists who were arrested for stealing whale meat.

They delivered a letter to Prime Minister Taro Aso and held a brief, silent protest in front of Parliament.

"About three years ago, Greenpeace began to realize that the way to

win the campaign, by that I mean the way to stop whaling in the southern ocean, was to gain support inside Japan," said Steve Shallhorn, the director of Greenpeace Australia.

The group's clashes with whalers at sea received largely negative press in Japan.

"Compared to the U.S. and Western Europe, Japan is less tolerant of deviant behavior. Anything that's a little out of the ordinary is a little bit disturbing," said Robert Dujarric, the director of the Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies at Temple University Japan.

Drowning, other accidents kill 800,000 kids a year

HANOI, Vietnam (AP)—Simple things like seat belts, childproof medicine caps and fences around pools could help prevent up to half of the 2,000 accidental deaths of children that happen each day around the world, UN officials said Wednesday.

More than 800,000 children die each year from burns, drowning, car accidents, falls, poisoning and other accidents, with the vast majority of those deaths occurring in developing coun-

tries, according to experts and a report released Wednesday by the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Tens of millions more suffer injuries that often leave them disabled for life, said the report which was launched at a meeting of global health experts in Hanoi. The World Report on Child Injury Prevention 2008 does not include injuries caused by domestic violence.

The problem is most acute in

Africa and Southeast Asia, but no country is immune, conference participants said, issuing an urgent call for action.

"The price of failure is high," said Margaret Chan, the director-general of the World Health Organization, speaking in a videotape shown at the conference. "On current estimates, unintentional injuries claim the lives of around 830,000 children worldwide every year."

300 Chinese activists sign public call for rights

BEIJING (AP)—Hundreds of Chinese activists issued an unusually open call Tuesday for greater freedoms and an end to China's one-party rule, and advocates said police detained two of the signatories before the statement was even issued.

The online statement—called the '08 Charter and signed by a group of more than 300 lawyers, writers, scholars and artists—represents a new public call for change in a country where criticizing the ruling Communist Party often brings swift punishment.

The statement proposed 19 measures to improve rights in China, including promoting an independent legal system, calling for freedom of association, and ending the monopoly of one-party rule. It was issued to coincide with Wednesday's 60th anniversary of the U.N. General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that inspired many later human rights treaties.

China signed the U.N. treaty but has not ratified it, meaning it is not bound by it.

"This charter promotes the same ideas and values that the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights asserts, such as freedom of the press, freedom of association, independent justice, freedom of religion and environmental protection," said lawyer Mo Shaoxing, who signed the statement.

"It has nothing that goes against China's constitution," he said.

However, one activist, Zhang Zhuhua, said police showed up at his house Monday night and detained him for questioning, holding him for 12 hours before releasing him Tuesday morning.

"They said I was involved in drafting the '08 Charter and warned me not to do it anymore. They searched my home and took my computer, books and bank cards," Zhang said.

Also detained Monday was Liu Xiaobo, an outspoken writer and political critic who had previously been jailed for his role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Zhang said.

Liu, 53, is a former Beijing Normal University professor who spent 20 months in jail for joining the 1989 student-led protests in Tiananmen Square, which ended when the government called in the military—killing hundreds, perhaps thousands.



ASIAN BRIEFS

Activist: NKorean worker flees Kaesong factory

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—A North Korean who was working at an enclave of South Korean factories in her communist country has defected to China with the aim of seeking asylum in the South, a South Korean civic activist said Wednesday. South Korea's Unification Ministry said it could not immediately confirm the claim. But if true, it would be the first attempted defection involving a North Korean working at the jointly run Kaesong industrial complex near the North-South border, ministry spokesman Kim

Ho-nyeon said. The 27-year-old has been hiding in China since fleeing the Kaesong complex in September and crossing the Tumen River into a Chinese border town, said Kim Yong-hwa, a North Korean defector-turned-activist now living in South Korea. Kim said the woman expressed frustration with life in the impoverished, communist North and told him in telephone conversations that she wanted to live in South Korea.

Death toll in India bus accident rises to 63

LUCKNOW, India (AP)—Police

say the death toll after a speeding bus caught fire in northern India has risen to 63. Senior police official Navneet Kumar said Wednesday that the dead from Tuesday's accident include eight children. Police say the 52-seat bus was crammed with more than 100 people when it caught fire, overturned and slid for several hundred yards (meters) down a highway. The accident happened near the town of Firozabad, 125 miles (200 kilometers) southwest of Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh state. The bus was taking pilgrims home after a visit to a Hindu religious

leader in Mathura.

Malaysia frees militant suspects held for years

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia has released a former army captain accused of helping the Sept. 11 hijackers, as well as six other suspects who had been held without trial, after deciding they no longer pose a threat, officials said Wednesday. Three alleged members of the Southeast Asian terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, two Thai separatist suspects and two Malaysians accused of helping foreign intelligence

agencies were released separately between Nov. 24 and Dec. 2, Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said. The most prominent among them is Yazid Sufaat, an ex-army captain who allegedly let several senior al-Qaida operatives, including two eventual Sept. 11 hijackers, use an apartment he owned for meetings in Malaysia in January 2000. Some of the seven released suspects had been held since 2002 under the Internal Security Act, which allows indefinite detention without trial of people whom the government regards as threats to national security.

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Somali pirates free Greek ship with 19 crew

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A Philippine official says Somali pirates have freed a Greek cargo ship with 19 crew members, mostly Filipinos, nearly three months after it was hijacked in the Gulf of Aden. Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said Wednesday the MV *Captain Stephanos*, a Greek-owned and Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier seized on Sept. 21, was freed on Monday. He says the 19 crew members, including 17 Filipinos, one Chinese and one Ukrainian, are in good health and the ship was sailing to Italy before proceeding to Greece. He says 91 Filipino seamen on six other vessels remain in the hands of Somali pirates. Lt. Nathan Christensen, a spokesman for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet in Bahrain, has confirmed the release of the *Stephanos*.

Red Cross unites 15 families in eastern Congo

GOMA, Congo (AP)—The Red Cross said Tuesday it has begun reuniting children and parents separated in eastern Congo as more than a quarter of a million people fled their homes during clashes between rebels and government troops. Some 134 youngsters without guardians have been registered since the end of October, but the Red Cross said the real number could be much higher. "There was panic when the guns started to fire," said Prosper Sebuhiye, the Goma-based manager of the new campaign. "People fled in every direction. In the confusion, many people lost sight of their children." Messages are being broadcast on four radio stations in violence-struck areas and the Red Cross will begin posting photographs of lost children in areas where displaced people are gathered. Fifteen families have been reunited over the past week, the Red Cross said in a statement.

Criticism shows growing frustration with Mugabe

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP)—Renewed criticism against Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe amid a cholera outbreak shows growing international outrage at the suffering there, but action to oust his regime will be harder to come by. U.S. President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy have called in the last week for Zimbabwe's 84-year-old leader to go. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter told National Public Radio that humanitarian conditions are "horrifying" in the southern African country, and that "the Mugabe government is so corrupt" only material goods—not cash—should be sent to help the country's people, according to an interview posted Tuesday on NPR's Web site. Some African leaders have again voiced frustration with Mugabe, transcending their usual practice of saying nothing against the man who is considered a hero among African freedom fighters and has ruled his country since its 1980 independence from Britain.

Greek police prepare for more violence



Greek riot police officers, backdropped by the Parliament, stand guard as protesters, not seen, placed candles and a placard showing a handgun, during a peaceful protest in central Athens Syntagma Square, late Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2008.

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—Greek police prepared for another round of violence with a nationwide strike planned for Wednesday morning, just hours after rioters angry over a teen's fatal police shooting marauded through cities for a fourth straight night.

The country's most violent riots in a quarter century were sparked by

last week's shooting death of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. Labor unions have strongly condemned the killing, and rallies are planned Wednesday during the general strike against the government's economic policies.

"There is another gathering (in the morning) with all that that may mean," police spokesman Panayiotis Stathis

said.

The nightly scenes of burning street barricades, looted stores and overturned cars have dealt a blow to the country's increasingly unpopular conservative government, which is facing mounting calls for Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis' resignation.

Police spokesman Panayiotis Stathis

Scientists try to mitigate climate change effects

POZNAN, Poland (AP)—Scientists studying the changing nature of the Earth's climate say they have completed one crucial task—proving beyond a doubt that global warming is real.

Now they have to figure out just what to do about it. "It is critical for us to get a much better understanding of the impact of climate change in some parts of the world," Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday.

Scientific warnings of potential catastrophe have been the backdrop for talks among more than 10,000 delegates and environmentalists negotiating a treaty to control the emission of greenhouse gases, which have grown by 70 percent since

1970. The treaty, due to be completed in one year, would replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Pachauri said he was concerned that negotiators were sparring and probing—and leaving key decisions for the last moment.

"My concern is that if we leave everything to the end, we might end up with a weak agreement that doesn't really address the problem," he said.

Last year, Pachauri's IPCC, which collected the work of more than 2,000 scientists, said climate change is "unequivocal, is already happening, and is caused by human activity."

It listed likely effects of global warming: arid regions will grow dryer, rising seas will flood coastal areas, melting glaciers will flood communities down-

stream and then dry up the source of future water supplies, and up to 30 percent of all plant and animal species may become extinct.

Since then, new evidence has emerged showing that ice caps in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting, which threatens to dramatically raise the level of the oceans and flood coastal cities and low-lying islands.

"Small island states are living in a state of fear," he said.

But Pachauri said there was no conclusive evidence the world is in imminent danger.

"I don't think we should jump to conclusions if we get material that is based on the last one or two years," the Indian scientist said. The IPCC issues its reports every five or six years.

Iraqi police arrest 30 in fatal truck bombings

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraqi police have arrested 30 members of an al-Qaida cell, including the alleged mastermind of truck bombings that killed 17 people in the former insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, officials said Tuesday.

Tariq al-Karbouli, the alleged leader of the cell, was picked up Monday in the Abu Ghraib area west of Baghdad, Iraqi officials said. The other members of the cell were apprehended in a series of raids that ended early Tuesday, the officials added.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information.

Two bomb-laden trucks exploded Thursday at police stations in Fallu-

jah, 40 miles west of Baghdad, killing 17 people and leveling buildings, police reported.

The brazen attacks in the most heavily guarded city in Iraq raised questions about the ability of Iraqi security forces to ensure security as the U.S. scales down its combat role under the newly ratified U.S.-Iraqi pact, which calls for an American pullout within three years.

One of the Iraqi officials said al-Karbouli, who works for a government-owned yogurt company, said explosives used in the attacks were smuggled into the city over a period of time hidden under bananas and other foodstuffs.

The official said al-Karbouli had confessed to his role in the bombings, but that the 11 other people directly involved were still at large.

Fallujah is located in Anbar province, the mostly Sunni area of western Iraq that had been the main theater of the war until Sunni tribes there broke with al-Qaida last year and joined forces with the Americans.

The city has been under intense security since U.S. forces drove out al-Qaida and other Sunni extremists in November 2004 during the fiercest urban fighting of the Iraq war.

With a drop in violence, the U.S. transferred security control of the province to the Iraqis last September.

said Athens had quieted by early Wednesday, with groups of youths holed up in a university building where officers have no access due to a tradition of university asylum.

Minor clashes continued in Thessaloniki, the country's second-largest city, where at least two people were arrested.

Police fired tear gas at protesters Tuesday following Grigoropoulos' funeral, which was attended by about 6,000 people.

A police statement said four people were arrested Tuesday for attacking police and 12 for looting. Twenty-five people were arrested for alleged possession of goods looted from damaged stores.

One person was hospitalized after being beaten by vigilantes who allegedly caught him looting in Athens, police said.

Seven officers were injured in Tuesday's clashes. No figures were available on civilian injuries.

The rioting—which has engulfed cities from Thessaloniki in the north to the islands of Corfu and Crete in the south—threatens the political career of Karamanlis, who already faces growing dissatisfaction over financial and social reforms at a time of deep anxiety over growing economic gloom. His government clings to a single seat majority in the 300-member Parliament.

Opposition Socialist leader George Papandreou called for early elections, saying the conservatives were incapable of defending the public from rioters.

Irish won't halt beef sales even with dioxin alert

DUBLIN, Ireland (AP)—Irish officials confirmed Tuesday that cattle at three farms have tested positive for dioxin—the cancer-causing chemical that has contaminated its pork industry—but insisted the country's beef posed no real risk to health.

Ireland has already ordered the withdrawal and destruction of all pork products produced since Sept. 1, a sweeping move the government says should reinforce—not undermine—international confidence in Ireland's food exports.

But Agriculture Minister Brendan Smith said the government decided not to recall any Irish beef products at home or abroad because, unlike the contamination of pork products, the level and extent of dioxin found so far in cattle is much lower.

Smith said the cattle with excessive dioxin levels were "technically non-compliant, but not at a level that would pose any public health concern." Still, he said Ireland would prevent the movement of any cattle or beef from the three farms in question.

Alan Reilly, deputy director of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, stressed that the dioxin levels found in the most contaminated cattle were just two to three times European Union safety limits, whereas pigs at nine dioxin-threatened Irish farms recorded dioxin levels 80 to 200 times too high.

Life & Style

Christmas parties around the island

PHOTOS BY REY BELGADO

LVMH holds 80s theme party

The local branch of luxury brand LVMH held a Christmas party for its employees and guests on Dec. 5 at the Claret Restaurant of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan, with an '80s Hollywood Awards Night theme that had everyone raiding their closets for circa 1980s attire. The party included staff and officers of the Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Loewe boutiques. Here are some pictures of that event:



Microl celebrates the holidays

Microl Corp., the local distributor of Toyota cars on the island, held a Christmas party for its officers, employees, associates, and guests last Friday, Dec. 6, 2008, at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan. Besides the raffling off of gifts, in-house band Street Beat also performed for the crowd. Here are some pictures from the event:



Academy Awards smackdown: Nixon vs Batman?

LOS ANGELES (AP)—It promises to be a colorful Academy Awards season when films featuring Richard Nixon and Batman could go toe-to-toe for best picture.

Ron Howard's "Frost/Nixon," featuring Frank Langella as the bad boy of American politics, might end up in a showdown with Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight," which offers Heath Ledger as the Joker in a new standard for bad boys in the comic-book world.

When it arrived last summer as Hollywood's biggest blockbuster in years, "The Dark Knight" was viewed as a likely Oscar contender for Ledger and for technical categories. A supporting-actor slot at the Oscar nominations Jan. 22 would come on the one-year anniversary of Ledger's death.

Awards watchers figured a Batman movie probably would not find much favor with snooty Oscar voters when it came to the top category, but the best-picture buzz has gotten stronger for "The Dark Knight" as studios unveiled their late-year prestige films.

Having "The Dark Knight" in the mix certainly could help the Oscar ceremony's TV ratings, which have slumped in recent years as smaller films such as "No Country for Old Men" and "Crash" dominated.

"We know that the most successful Oscars tend to be the ones that include the big, popular blockbusters like 'Lord of the Rings,' 'Titanic,' in terms of just people in America caring about the show," said Tom O'Neil, a columnist for the awards Web site TheEnvelope.com. "You could argue whether or not 'The Dark Knight' is the best movie of the year, but you can't argue the fact that it was THE movie of the year, the most talked-about movie."

Others among the potentially lively lineup for Hollywood's big party: a racist war vet (Clint Eastwood, "Gran Torino"); a slain gay-rights politico (Sean Penn, "Milk"); an old-school nun (Meryl Streep, "Doubt"); an addict upstaging her sister's wedding (Anne Hathaway, "Rachel Getting Married"); a has-been wrestler (Mickey Rourke, "The Wrestler"); a mom with an impostor son (Angelina Jolie, "Changeling"); and a guy born old who ages backward toward infancy (Jolie's man, Brad Pitt, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button").

Some critics are calling "Frost/Nixon" the best work yet from Howard, who already has delivered best-picture and director Oscars for "A Beautiful Mind." Reprising the role he created on stage, Langella is a marvel of awkward hubris and tragic grandeur as Nixon, squaring off against TV personality David Frost (Michael



In this image released by Sony Pictures Classics, Anne Hathaway is shown in a scene from "Rachel Getting Married."

Sheen) in a series of pivotal 1977 interviews.

Langella could be the second person nominated as best actor for playing the fallen president, following Anthony Hopkins in Oliver Stone's 1995 film biography "Nixon."

"Nixon's a fascinating paradox. He was a great intellect with a lot of important ideas and made some real political inroads on a sort of global level. And yet he's a classically tragic figure," Howard said. "Some people who worked with him closely said he always felt like he was the kid on the outside looking into the toy store, nose pressed to the glass. He was so uncomfortable in his own skin, and yet brilliant and biting and tough."

Stone's 2008 presidential picture, the George W. Bush saga "W.", looks like a longshot for major nominations, though it could sneak in for some of the performances.

The prolific Eastwood released two films within a couple of months that are grabbing major Oscar attention, "Changeling" and "Gran Torino."

Kate Winslet also has two films in the mix: the domestic drama "Revolutionary Road," her reunion with "Titanic" co-star Leonardo DiCaprio; and the Holocaust-themed story "The Reader." "Revolutionary Road" was directed by Winslet's husband, Sam Mendes, an Oscar winner for "American Beauty."

One of the season's unusual competitors is Danny Boyle's "Slumdog Millionaire," featuring a cast of unknowns in the alternately buoyant and horrifying tale of a boy from the slums of Mumbai whose appearance on India's version of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" may finally reunite him with a lost child-

hood sweetheart.

As always, Pixar Animation, makers of "Ratatouille," "Finding Nemo" and "Toy Story," is in the running for the animated-feature Oscar with "WALL-E." Yet the story of the adorably plucky robot was so well-received that the film stands an outside chance at a best-picture nomination, too.

For a TV ratings boost, the best thing that could happen to the Oscars would be best-picture nominations for both "WALL-E" and "The Dark Knight." The two blockbusters would give viewers much more of a vested interest in the awards outcome than they have had in years.

Director Nolan raised the comic-book genre to a new high with "The Dark Knight," and he's tickled at the thought that his film is getting serious consideration from Oscar voters who typically do not lean toward superhero flicks. "I'm sure when you interview people, they're talking about their movies at the end of the year, I'm sure the line you hear a lot is, 'Well, that's not why we do this,'" Nolan said. "Mercifully, in the case of doing a superhero movie, I really can say that's not why we're doing this. It's not the obvious Oscar prospect. 'Just the fact that you'd even ask that question in relation to a populist film in a populist genre, that certainly is an exciting thing, and it's really fun.'"

A rundown of front-runners and some longshots that could turn up in the Oscar mix:

BEST PICTURE

"The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," "The Dark Knight," "Defiance," "Doubt," "Frost/Nixon," "Gran Torino," "Milk,"

"Millionaire"; Stephen Daldry, "The Reader"; Clint Eastwood, "Changeling," "Gran Torino"; David Fincher, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"; Ron Howard, "Frost/Nixon"; Sam Mendes, "Revolutionary Road"; Christopher Nolan, "The Dark Knight"; John Patrick Shanley, "Doubt"; Steven Soderbergh, "Che"; Andrew Stanton, "WALL-E"; Gus Van Sant, "Milk"; Edward Zwick, "Defiance."

BEST ACTOR

Christian Bale, "The Dark Knight"; Josh Brolin, "W."; Daniel Craig, "Defiance"; Benicio Del Toro, "Che"; Leonardo DiCaprio, "Revolutionary Road"; Clint Eastwood, "Gran Torino"; Richard Jenkins, "The Visitor"; Frank Langella, "Frost/Nixon"; Sean Penn, "Milk"; Brad Pitt, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"; Mickey Rourke, "The Wrestler"; Will Smith, "Seven Pounds."

BEST ACTRESS

Cate Blanchett, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"; Anne Hathaway, "Rachel Getting Married"; Sally Hawkins, "Happy-Go-Lucky"; Angelina Jolie, "Changeling"; Keira Knightley, "The Duchess"; Melissa Leo, "Frozen River"; Kristin Scott Thomas, "I've Loved

You So Long"; Meryl Streep, "Doubt"; Michelle Williams, "Wendy and Lucy"; Kate Winslet, "The Reader," "Revolutionary Road."

SUPPORTING ACTOR:

Josh Brolin, "Milk"; James Cromwell, "W."; Robert Downey Jr., "Tropic Thunder"; Richard Dreyfuss, "W."; Ralph Fiennes, "The Duchess," "The Reader"; James Franco, "Milk"; Philip Seymour Hoffman, "Doubt"; David Kross, "The Reader"; Heath Ledger, "The Dark Knight"; John Malkovich, "Changeling"; Eddie Marsan, "Happy-Go-Lucky"; Dev Patel, "Slumdog Millionaire"; Michael Shannon, "Revolutionary Road"; Michael Sheen, "Frost/Nixon."

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Amy Adams, "Doubt"; Elizabeth Banks, "W."; Kathy Bates, "Revolutionary Road"; Penelope Cruz, "Vicky Cristina Barcelona"; Viola Davis, "Doubt"; Rosemarie DeWitt, "Rachel Getting Married"; Taraji P. Henson, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"; Tilda Swinton, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"; Marisa Tomei, "The Wrestler"; Misty Upham, "Frozen River"; Evan Rachel Wood, "The Wrestler"; Debra Winger, "Rachel Getting Married."

In loving memory of

Francisco Matagolai Pangelinan (Bokonggo)

NOVEMBER 22, 1954 — DECEMBER 4, 2008

of Yigo formerly of Saipan was called to our creator at the age of 54.
Francisco will be greeted at the gates of heaven by his
Parents: †Eugenia Matagolai Pangelinan, †Ficio C. Pangelinan, †Jose R. Cruz,
and step mother: †Maria C. Cruz.
Grandparents: †Simeon, †Rufina P. Matagolai, and †Jose, †Maria C. Pangelinan
Brother: †Joseph C. Cruz
Sister: †Ferminia Cruz Fleming and †Reginia S.N. Taga
Uncle: †Jesus P. and †Serafin P. Matagolai

Children & Spouse:
 Franklin DLG, Adryanne S. Pangelinan, (Grand Daughter) Ana Lu Fachalani S. Pangelinan,
 Lief DLG Pangelinan, Sheike DLG Pangelinan
 and Lucy M. De Leon Guerrero (First Wife).
 Zylzohni "Zohin Boy" D. Pangelinan / Renee Quichocho, Phayvian D. Pangelinan,
 Shaibe "Bok" D. Pangelinan, Patty Dage - Pangelinan (Second Wife).

He is also survived by numerous siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, godparents, godson and goddaughters.

His remains will arrive from Guam on Friday December 12, 2008 at 8:30am and will be escorted to Nuestra Señora Dela Paz Memorial Chapel at the Cabrera Center. Rosary will be said upon his arrival. His 9th day mass will be offered at San Antonio church at 6:00pm and Rosary will be followed at 8:00pm at Nuestra Señora Dela Paz Memorial Chapel.

On Saturday, December 13, 2008 his body will leave Nuestra Señora Dela Paz Memorial Chapel at 6:30am to Mt. Carmel Cathedral.

Responso and Rosary will follow upon arrival.

'WALL-E' wins L.A. critics best-picture honor

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Los Angeles Film Critics Association has gone populist on its picks for best movies of 2008, choosing the animated smash "WALL-E" as No. 1 and the Batman blockbuster "The Dark Knight" as runner-up on Tuesday. Sean Penn was named best actor for the film biography "Milk," while Sally Hawkins received the best-actress prize for the British comic drama "Happy-Go-Lucky."

The late Heath Ledger won the critics group's supporting-actor honor for his turn as the Joker in "The Dark Knight," while Penelope Cruz was chosen for supporting actress in the Woody Allen romance "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," as well as her role in the drama "Elegy."

Danny Boyle took directing honors for "Slumdog Millionaire," with Christopher Nolan the runner-up for "The Dark Knight." "Happy-Go-Lucky"

director Mike Leigh won for best screenplay. The critics' picks are one of the early film honors in Hollywood's long awards season, which continues Thursday with nominations for the Golden Globes, the second-biggest ceremony after the Academy Awards.

Globe nominations and critics prizes can boost Oscar prospects, particularly for lesser-known films such as "Happy-Go-Lucky" and "Slumdog Million-

aire." Oscar nominations come out Jan. 22, with the awards ceremony scheduled for Feb. 22.

"WALL-E" and "The Dark Knight" were unusually commercial choices for the critics, whose past best-picture winners have tended toward smaller films such as 2007's "There Will Be Blood" and other recipients that include "Letters From Iwo Jima," "Brokeback Mountain" and "Sideways."

Among runners-up for the crit-

ics awards were Mickey Rourke, best actor for "The Wrestler"; Melissa Leo, best actress for "Frozen River"; Eddie Marsan, supporting actor for "Happy-Go-Lucky"; Viola Davis, supporting actress for "Doubt"; and Charlie Kaufman, screenplay for "Synecdoche, New York."

With "WALL-E" as their best-picture winner, the critics chose the war documentary "Waltz With Bashir" as their top animated film.

Other winners include:

- Foreign-language film: "Still Life."
- Documentary: "Man on Wire."
- Production design: "Synecdoche, New York."
- Music-score: "Slumdog Millionaire."
- Cinematography: "Still Life."

The Los Angeles critics will present their awards at a ceremony on Jan. 12.

Britney Spears' 'Circus' CD lands her at No. 1

NEW YORK (AP)—Britney Spears' latest CD, "Circus," has landed her back at a familiar position—No. 1. The singer's comeback CD—actually, make that her second comeback CD—will top the album

charts next week, according to her label, Jive. Though Nielsen SoundScan does not release its official figures until Wednesday, estimates have the record selling as many as 500,000 copies in its first week of release.

"This is going to reinforce her icon status," said Barry Weiss, chairman and CEO of the BMG Label Group, which includes Spears' label. "It's not just a No. 1 album."

Indeed, it's not. For Spears,

who has rebounded after a disastrous year that included rehab, a custody battle for her two sons and court-ordered supervision by her father, it is another step in her bid to reclaim her status among pop's elite.

"At the end of the day, I think she is America's pop princess, and the world's pop princess, and this just reconfirms it to everyone who doubted it," said her manager, Larry Rudolph.

While her last CD, "Blackout," also debuted at No. 1 when it was released in October 2007, it quickly fizzled on the U.S. charts, despite receiving critical acclaim, because Spears didn't really promote it amid the chaos in her life.

Things appear to be different this time around. Spears has been showing off her dancing moves

and taut body during high-profile appearances on shows like ABC's "Good Morning America" and was also the focus of a documentary, "Britney: For the Record." The special, executive produced by Rudolph, aired on MTV in the days before the release of "Circus."

"The documentary had a huge role," said Rudolph. "People were able to see Britney, to see her tell her story. I think they got the true sense of who she is, and they appreciated it."

"Circus," which debuted to mainly positive reviews, was released on the singer's 27th birthday, Dec. 2. The CD's first single, "Womanizer," was a No. 1 hit, and her latest single, "Circus," was the most added song at pop radio, her label said.

Spears plans a nationwide

tour that is set to kick off March 3 in New Orleans.

Weiss said Jive decided to release "Circus" just a year after "Blackout" because of the strength of the music, and said recording the CD was a great constructive outlet for the singer.

Rudolph said when it comes to crunching the numbers, Spears is not all that interested in how many copies she sold the first week or her chart positions. But, he added: "Professionally, she's feeling great. ... It's great for her to hear that she's got a No. 1 album again."

One of entertainment's biggest names, Spears has been a multiplatinum sensation since she made her debut over a decade ago. She's sold more than 30 million albums in the United States alone.

Oprah Winfrey says she weighs 200 pounds

CHICAGO (AP)—An embarrassed Oprah Winfrey says she's "fallen off the wagon" of healthy living and has ballooned to 200 pounds.

In January's "O" magazine, Winfrey, 54, details her recent struggles with an out-of-balance thyroid and how the condition made her develop "a fear of working out." She says she's gained 40 pounds since 2006, when she weighed 160.

"I look at my thinner self and think, 'How did I let this happen again?'" the talk-show queen says in the article provided early to The Associated Press by Harpo Productions.

"I'm embarrassed," she says. "I'm mad at myself."

Winfrey's weight and height put her body mass index at 31.8, which is obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC says people who are obese are at higher risk for chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol.

Winfrey says she's abandoned trying to get thin. She just wants to be strong, healthy and fit. She hopes to get started with her upcoming "Best Life Week," starting Jan. 5 with an episode of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" during which she is expected to talk candidly about her weight.

Winfrey famously wheeled a wagon loaded

with fat onto the set of her talk show in 1988 to represent a 67-pound weight loss while wearing a pair of size 10 Calvin Klein jeans. She had lost the weight with a liquid protein diet.

"When it comes to maintaining my health I didn't just fall off the wagon. I let the wagon fall on me," the chairwoman of Harpo Inc. writes. "I didn't follow my own fundamental rule of taking care of self first." In 2005, Winfrey said she starved herself for four months to lose weight. Ever since, her weight has yo-yoed. She weighed as much as 237 pounds and by late 1990 acknowledged she had regained most of the 67 pounds, saying "I'll never diet again."

In 1993, she hired personal trainer Bob Greene and the next year finished the Marine Corps Marathon. By 1996 she said her roller-coaster weight saga was over.

But now, Winfrey finds herself tipping the scales again, telling AP Television last week that she has yet to choose a gown for President-elect Barack Obama's inaugural ball next month.

"I had a dress on the vision board, but I'm not sure that's gonna fit," Winfrey said. "So I have to work on something else."



A Sept. 21, 2008 file photo shows Oprah Winfrey opening the 60th Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.

HOLLYWOOD THEATERS

Don't just go to the movies. GO HOLLYWOOD!

Located near Price Costco in San Jose Saipan MP • 234-9000



\$5.25 Bargain Matinees - All Shows Before 6PM
\$5.25 All Day Admission For Seniors
\$4.25 All Day Admission For Kids (ages 3-11)
\$5.25 Student Admission with Valid I.D.
\$5.25 Military with Valid I.D.

TUESDAY BARGAIN \$5.25 ALL SHOWS ALL DAY/NIGHT (EXCLUDING HOLIDAYS AND RESTRICTED FEATURES)

RESERVE TICKETS ONLINE AT www.gohollywood.com



For Friday, December 5 through Thursday, December 11 only!
OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK



NOW SHOWING



My Only U

Friday 4:20 7:05 9:35
 Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:10 9:35
 Sunday 1:05 4:20 7:05
 Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:05

Vhong Navarro, Toni Gonzaga
 Comedy, Romance • Rated PG 13

Synopsis

Bong, a tenement manager, who has always liked his friend Winona but never summoned the courage to tell her of his feelings. He has no idea that Winona is also interested in him romantically. One day, in the tenement he is managing, he receives final notes from their late neighborhood doctor's assistant: one for him, one for Winona. When he checked his, he found out he was given a clean bill of health. He was worried for Winona who belongs to a family whose women all die before the age of 25.



Punisher War Zone

Friday 4:10 7:25 9:40
 Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:25 9:40
 Sunday 1:20 4:10 7:25
 Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:25

Ray Stevenson, Dominic West
 Action, Adventure • Rated PG

Synopsis

Waging his one-man war on the world of organized crime, ruthless vigilante-hero, Frank Castle sets his sights on overzealous mob boss, Billy Russo. After Russo is left horribly disfigured by Castle, he sets out for vengeance under his new alias: Jigsaw. With the "Punisher Task Force" hot on his trail and FBI unable to take Jigsaw in, Frank must stand up to the formidable army that Jigsaw has recruited before more of his evil deeds go unpunished.



Four Christmases

Friday 4:05 7:10 9:45
 Saturday 1:15 4:05 7:10 9:45
 Sunday 1:15 4:05 7:10
 Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:10

Nince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon
 Comedy, Family, Holiday • Rated PG 13

Synopsis

No one enjoys the holidays more than Brad and Kate. Every December 25th, this happily unmarried, upscale San Francisco couple embark on a holiday tradition they have shared every year since they met—ditching their crazy families for a relaxing, fun-filled vacation in some sunny exotic locale. There, sipping margaritas by the pool, they toast the season, knowing they have once again avoided the chaos and emotional fallout of their four respective households: divorced parents, squabbling siblings, out-of-control kids and all the simmering resentments and awkward moments that are the hallmarks of every family Christmas.



Australia

Friday 4:00 7:00 10:00
 Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00
 Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
 Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:00

Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman
 War, Romance • Rated PG 13



Transporter 3

Friday 4:30 7:15 9:55
 Saturday 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55
 Sunday 1:25 4:30 7:15
 Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:15

Jason Statham, Robert Berland
 Action, Crime, Sequel • Rated PG 13



Twilight

Friday 4:25 7:20 9:50
 Saturday 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50
 Sunday 1:30 4:25 7:20
 Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:20

Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson
 Drama, Thriller • Rated PG 13



Bolt

Friday 4:15 7:30 9:30
 Saturday 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30
 Sunday 1:10 4:15 7:30
 Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:30

John Travolta, Miley Cyrus
 Action, Animated • Rated PG

● NO PASSES ■ NO PASSES OR SUPER SAVERS

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE • R-RATED FILMS REQUIRE PHOTO I.D.

www.gohollywood.com

1 of Fantasia's homes is up for auction

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—“American Idol” winner Fantasia Barrino is again finding that, like the title of her autobiography, life is not a fairy tale.

Court documents obtained Tuesday show one of Barrino's houses in Charlotte is up for auction after a company said Barrino failed to repay money it loaned her to cover her taxes in 2006. The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office is scheduled to sell the home, valued at \$1.1 million, in January. The home isn't in foreclosure, but rather is being used to compensate the company that loaned Barrino money to cover taxes.

Barrino, whose autobiography is titled “Life is Not a Fairy Tale,” has rapidly ascended to stardom after winning the third season of “American Idol” in 2004.

A single mother and high school dropout from High Point, located in central North Carolina, Barrino has released two albums and debuted on Broadway playing the lead role of Celie in the musical version of “The Color Purple.” She also is nominated for a Grammy for “I'm His Only Woman,” a song she performs with fellow “American Idol” alumna and Academy Award winning actress Jennifer Hudson.

Even if January's sale proceeds, Barrino still has a house in Charlotte. The soul singer has a \$529,000 home a couple miles from the one scheduled for sale in south Charlotte.

Larry Goldman, a Charlotte-based attorney representing the Florida company that made the loan, said he hopes Barrino will pay the judgment before the home goes to auction on Jan. 12.

“It seems like a huge waste of time and resources, and puts her home at risk,” Goldman said. “I can't imagine that somebody is not advising her that it would be expedient to write a check and not have to deal with all the ramifications of having her home sold.”

He said the two sides had contact when the complaint was initially served in January, but he's had no formal contact since then. Goldman said he decided to go after Barrino's larger home because it appeared to be her place of residence.

Ruffalo's brother dies in LA

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—The brother of actor Mark Ruffalo has died a week after he was shot in the head, police said Tuesday.

Scott Ruffalo, 39, died late Monday night at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills Police Sgt. Renato Moreno said.

Authorities continued to investigate the role of a woman suspected of being involved in the shooting. Shaha Mishaal Adham, 26, turned herself in to police Monday after authorities issued a warrant for her arrest

on an attempted murder charge.

Her initial court appearance is scheduled Wednesday.

Police have declined to discuss a motive for the shooting or possible evidence against Adham, who is being held without bail.

Scott Ruffalo, a hairstylist, was found with a gunshot wound to the head in Beverly Hills on Dec. 1.

His family released a statement Tuesday evening to thank supporters and announce the creation of a fund in his honor.

“Mark Ruffalo and his family deeply appreciate the outpouring

of prayers and support during this most difficult time of the passing of Scott Ruffalo, beloved son, brother and husband,” the statement read. The family said the funeral service would be private.

Another man wanted for questioning, Brian B. Scofield, also turned himself in to police on Monday and was released. Police have not said whether he is still considered a suspect.

Mark Ruffalo, 41, has appeared in films such as “Zodiac,” “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” and this year's “Blindness.”



MOVIE PREMIERE

Actors Keanu Reeves and Jennifer Connelly attend the premiere of “The Day The Earth Stood Still” in New York on Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2008.

Jennifer Hudson to begin filming video next week

NEW YORK (AP)—Jennifer Hudson is getting back to work.

The singer is set to begin filming a video next week for her single, “If This Isn't Love,” according to her label, J Records.

Hudson was due to film the clip in Los Angeles when her mother, Darnell Hudson Donerson, and brother, Jason Hudson, were discovered shot to death in their Chicago home on the city's South Side on Oct. 24. The body of her nephew, 7-year-old Julian King, was found in a sport utility vehicle three days later.

Hudson's estranged brother-

in-law, William Balfour, who is married to Hudson's sister Julia, has been charged in the slayings. Prosecutors have said Balfour was upset Julia had been dating another man.

Hudson has been in seclusion since the killings. However, she has thanked the public for their support since the tragedy, and last week issued a statement after she was nominated for four Grammy awards, including best R&B album for her self-titled debut. “It's been a childhood dream of mine to release an album, so to receive four

Grammy nominations is truly a blessing,” she said. “I am extremely honored and humbled by the nominations.”

Hudson—also an Academy Award-winning actress—was reaching a new career peak at the time of the killings. She had just released her first CD, and was also starring in the movie “The Secret Life of Bees.” She was featured in the summer blockbuster “Sex and the City” and sang the national anthem the night President-Elect Barack Obama accepted the Democratic presidential nomination in Denver.

Abuse survivor fears to tell new girlfriend about his past

By **ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DEAR ABBY: I am a 33-year-old man who has never been in a serious relationship until now. I have been seeing “Stephie” for eight months and think I may be in love with her.

I have successfully managed to evade Stephie's questions about my past and got away with it until recently. She keeps asking me about the scars on my body. (I was physically abused by my parents when I was a child.) Regrettably, I lied to her about the nature of the scars.

Stephie wants to be married and start a family, and so do I. She wants her kids to have a great dad, and I think I can be a very good parent. I would never do to my kids what was done to me.

On the one hand, I want an open, honest relationship with her. On the other, I'm afraid if I tell her the truth she will leave me, and I'll spiral into another five-year depression I may not be able to escape from.

My parents are both dead now, so I could continue to lie without Stephie ever knowing. But I get the feeling she doesn't entirely believe what I've been telling her. What should I do?

SURVIVOR IN OHIO

DEAR SURVIVOR: Because you are discussing a future together, it's time to level with Stephie about everything. That you would not want to discuss this painful subject at the beginning of a relationship is understandable. But please do not continue the deception.

You should also explain to Stephie about your period of clinical depression. If she's going to marry you, she has a right to know your medical history.

Yes, telling her may be risky. However, if she loves you, she will accept you just the way you are. And if she isn't up to the challenge, it's better to find out now before becoming any more involved.

P.S. If you feel that a breakup could trigger another round of depression, it is important that you talk to a psychotherapist NOW. The abuse you suffered in childhood may have left emotional scars as lasting as the physical ones, but with therapy you may be able to heal.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm not sure how to react to something a friend of mine recently told me. We have known “Lois” and her husband for more than 30 years. They no longer live in this city, but visit occasionally. When they do, we always invite them to stay in our home.

On their last visit, Lois was talking about her only child, “Deidre,” whom I have always liked. Lois, out of the blue, began chuckling and then told me that Deidre does a good imitation of me. Lois sat there giggling for a few minutes, then said that Deidre sounded almost as much like me as I do. I made no comment.

Frankly, I was taken aback that someone would do an imitation of me. I got the impression that Deidre has been doing my “act” for a while, and I found it disturbing. My husband says it's a form of flattery, but I think it's demeaning. I also think impersonating someone for the amusement of others—especially if the person is not around—is rude. What do you think?

JOKE'S ON ME IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

DEAR J.O.M.: I think you should have asked your friend Lois to clarify her remark at the time she made it. But because you didn't, bring it up the next time you talk to her and let her explain what was so funny.

Personally, I think such imitations are often a form of ridicule and are unkind.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in “What Every Teen Should Know.” To order, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

‘Nanny’ state? Drescher eyes Clinton's Senate seat

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—The star of “The Nanny” wants to go from playing nasally New Yorkers to succeeding Hillary Rodham Clinton in the U.S. Senate. Publicist Jordan Brown delivered the straight line that Fran Drescher is serious about becoming the next junior senator from New York. Brown cited Drescher's experience as an actress, advocate for women's health and public diplomacy envoy for the U.S. State Department. The 51-year-old “Saturday Night Fever” and “This

is Spinal Tap” actress joins a field headed by Caroline Kennedy and New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo. New York Gov. David Paterson will appoint Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's successor if she is confirmed secretary of state in the Obama administration.

Abdul chides Fox, ‘Idol’ producers over stalker

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Paula Abdul says the Fox network and “American Idol” producers knew Paula Goodspeed had stalked her, and allowed the woman to audition for the

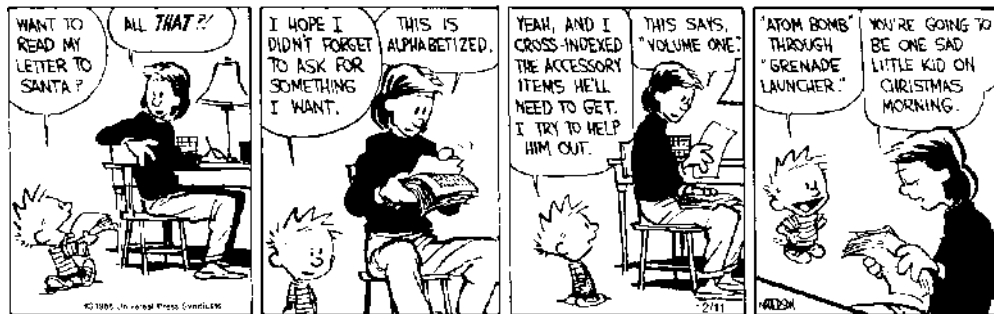
show anyway. “I said this girl is a stalker of mine and please do not let her in,” Abdul said Monday during an interview with Barbara Walters on her Sirius XM radio show. Goodspeed was found dead of an apparent suicide in a car near Abdul's home last month. Abdul said “Idol” producers ignored her protests and brought Goodspeed on the show “for entertainment value.” “It's fun for them to cause me stress,” Abdul said. “This was something that would make good television.” At the behest of producers, Goodspeed appeared on the show more than once, Abdul

said. Both Fox and Fremantle Media North America, which produces “American Idol,” declined to comment Tuesday. Abdul, 46, said Goodspeed had written her “disturbing letters” for nearly 18 years and that she maintained a restraining order against the woman at times. The “American Idol” judge also accused Fox of making her home address public, although she added that Goodspeed found the place on her own after an audition: “She followed me home with her mom.” When Walters asked why Abdul remains on a show that put her in peril, Abdul replied: “I'm under contract.”

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



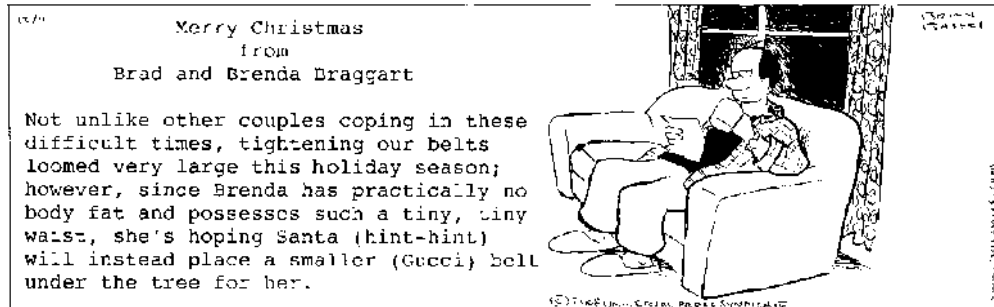
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



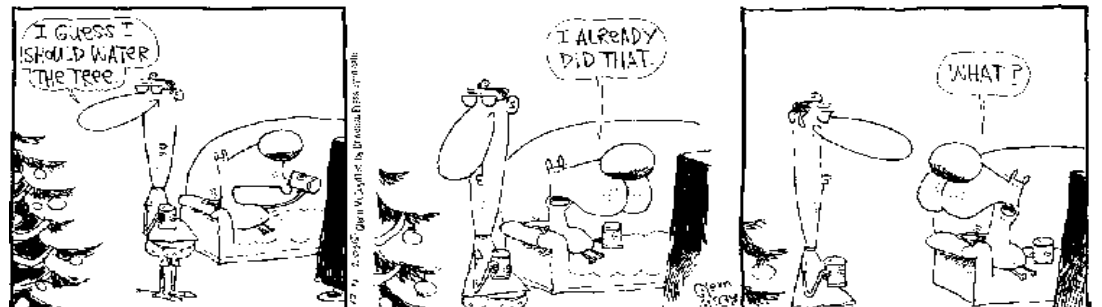
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Maintained

5 Flavor enhancer

9 Expert

12 Reed instrument

13 Follow instructions

14 Lubricant

15 China

17 Vitamin stat

18 Reddish blue

19 Skiers' mecca

21 Perform

22 Bean or pony

24 Info

27 Bawl

28 Kennel cries

31 Lennon's lady

32 Raw rock

33 Bribe

34 Bacterium

36 Performance

37 Catherine — Jones'

DOWN

1 Pucblo dweller

2 Black, in verse

3 Parliament VIP

4 Make up your mind

5 Unaccompanied

6 "The — Daba"

7 Mainlander's memento

8 Theater critic

9 Dolphin

10 Carnival attraction

11 "The Good Earth" heroine

12 Black, in verse

13 Parliament VIP

14 Make up your mind

15 Unaccompanied

16 Id counter-part

17 Pigs' digs

18 Veranda

19 "Yeah, right!"

20 Follow relentlessly

21 Inseparable

22 Bears' food?

23 Daytime drama

24 Cauldron

25 Hot tub

26 Singer Davis

27 All but one in a million?

28 Runs easily

29 "Bow-wow!"

30 Captain's group

31 Take on

32 On

33 Exile isle

34 Parent sharers

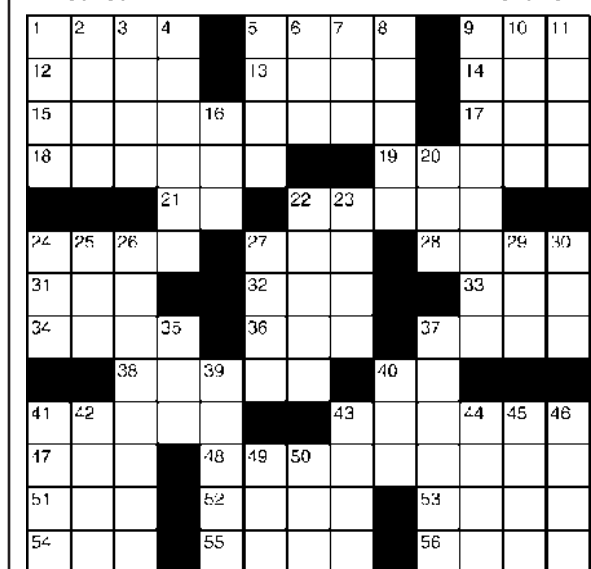
35 Pitch

36 Halloween abbr.

37 Pi follower

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterdays answer 12-11



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/relay phones. (18+ or y.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Rider Strong, 29; Mos Def, 35; Gary Dourdan, 42; Bess Armstrong, 55

Happy Birthday: You can secure your professional position by picking up additional skills and preparing for a career change. Use your ingenuity and talent to come up with services that can parlay into your own business. Being insightful regarding your ability and what others need will separate you from the crowd and lead you forward with your goals. Your numbers are 3, 8, 16, 22, 30, 35, 49

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Educate yourself so you are fully prepared to put any services you can offer into play promptly. You don't want to miss the festive rush when what you have to offer could be exactly what others will pay for. ★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't get run down because you are too nice to say no. Put things in perspective and decide what's really important to you. If a relationship is causing stress, rethink the connection. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You can pull off the impossible and entice everyone to side with you. You have the chance to make a go of something that may have been out of the question in the past. Don't hesitate or let someone stand in your way. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You may want to spend a little extra to please someone who means a lot to you. In the long run, your investment in a good relationship will secure your financial and emotional future. Accommodate what others want. ★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Focus on having fun with the ones you love. Get involved in a unique group that offers help to the needy. Your contributions will lead to positive contacts for your own projects. Spread your Leo generosity and festive spirit. ★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't be fooled by someone putting unreasonable demands on you. Keep your emotions out of the workplace. Being non-productive will cause someone you respect to question your ability. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You will feel better once you have things in place at home. Inviting guests over will speak volumes about who you are and what you stand for. Expand your interests and your friendships. ★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Put more focus on home and family, especially if you have neglected some of your personal duties. A partnership may appear sound but unless you come out with cash in hand, take a pass. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Expect someone to stand in your way or at least give you a hard time. Don't take no for an answer but also do not let emotions interfere with what needs to be done. There are opportunities professionally that could lead you in a new direction. ★★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): By taking a fun-loving approach to the things you do today, you will throw any competition off-balance. Your spur-of-the-

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

moment changes and inconsistent decisions will keep others guessing. This time, playing games will definitely work to your advantage. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Make a move to a larger place or invest in something that will allow you to make extra cash from home. This is the perfect time to offer your services and open up possibilities that can lead to greater cash flow. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Too much can go wrong if you let your emotions take over. Think before you act and refrain from letting your temper get the better of you. Problems with neighbors, peers or even a close friend or relative will escalate if you refuse to really listen. ★★

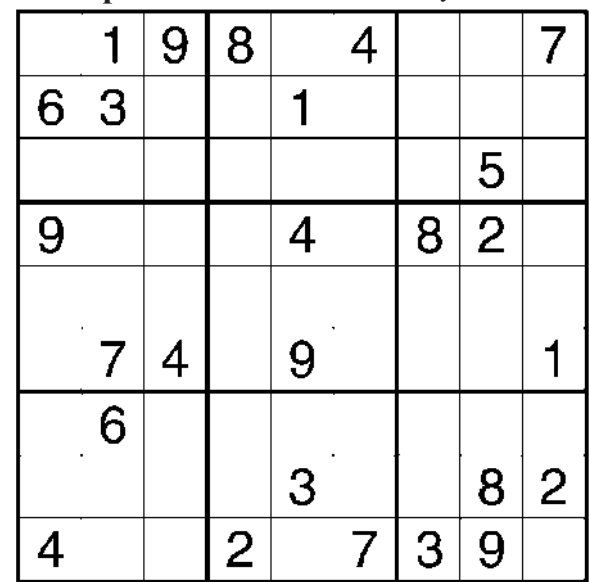
Birthday Baby: You are intuitive, intelligent, aggressive and intent on doing what you want to do. You aren't afraid to take the lead and will stand up for your beliefs and rights.

Eugenia's Web sites: astroadvice.com for fun, eugenialast.com for confidential consultations

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

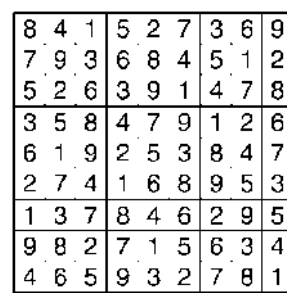


Difficulty Level ★★★

12/11

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer



Difficulty Level ★★★

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: A. the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

BUSINESS INSURANCE

Solution: 8 letters



12/11

Agency, Apartment, Basic, Broker, Building, Claim, Company, Contents, Cost, Custom, Damage, Deductible, Disrupt, Electrical, Financial, Gain, Harm, Income, Injury, Laws, Legal, Limbs, Loss, Mail, Medical, Monthly, Occupation, Office, Offer, Operation, Owner, Policy, Premium, Price, Protect, Risk, Sell, Sign, Special, Stock, Tools, Yearly

Yesterday's Answer: References

WONDERWORD is a trademark of Conceptis Puzzles, Inc. for its 9x9 grid puzzle. © 2007 Universal Press Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved. The puzzle is a trademark of Universal Press Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved. The puzzle is a trademark of Universal Press Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

©2007 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

CLASSIFIED ADS

WANTED TO LEASE

Looking for property with nice oceanview to lease, preparably direct from land owner. Please contact 483-9984

FOR RENT - RESIDENTIAL

Fina Sisu Apt., 2-BR, FF, AC, 24-hr pwr/water, security, laundry room, free Wi-Fi & ample parking. MIHA applicants accepted. Right behind NMC campus. Special rates for NMC faculty/students. Call 235-6527/8 or 285-1317 for info.

Apartment for rent: Brand new studio type apartment, across NMC & Riviera Hotel, brand new...furnished, air-conditioner, water heater, refrigerator, free wi-fi internet. Only \$200/month. Contact: Danny @ 287-2387.

WHATZIT Solution: Lady Godiva

share the power of a wish...



"I want to go shopping!"

MAKE-A-WISH

Visit us at
865 S. Marine Dr., Orlean Pacific Plaza
Ste. 104 Tamuning, Guam 96913
Tel: (671) 649-WISH
Fax: (671) 646-6293
Email: mawiguam@ite.net
www.wish.org
Office Hours: 8:30am to 5:30pm, M-F daily

Saipan Tribune

WHATZIT?

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

GOOLIVA

Find today's solution in this section

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as \$25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	\$25
• 5-Liner	\$35
• 3-Liner with picture	\$45
• 5-Liner with picture	\$55

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- Saipan Tribune: All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the Saipan Tribune are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

Subscribe to the CNMI's First Daily Newspaper



235- NEWS

Kings snap 8-game skid, stun Lakers

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Francisco Garcia and John Salmons scored 21 points apiece, and the Sacramento Kings snapped an eight-game losing streak with a surprising 113-101 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

Bobby Jackson added 15 points for the Kings, whose first victory in nine home games was one of the NBA's most improbable results of the young season. Sacramento (6-16), which had lost 11 of its last 12 games overall, steadily increased a fourth-quarter lead against the Lakers, who couldn't rally while Kobe Bryant struggled with 9-of-25 shooting.

Bryant scored 28 points and Pau Gasol had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, who had won three straight while opening the season 17-2, matching the best start in franchise history.

With a home visit from Shaquille O'Neal's Phoenix Suns looming on Wednesday night, the Lakers might have overlooked the lowly Kings. Bryant missed 11 of his first 13 shots against Salmons' defense, and the reigning league MVP couldn't rally the Lakers as he's done so many times at Arco Arena, the site of some of his greatest performances.

Playing without injured leading scorer Kevin Martin, Sacramento took a seven-point lead into the fourth quarter and scored eight straight points to go up 97-82 with 9 1/2 minutes to play. The Kings led by 17 with 6 1/2 minutes left, increasing the lead even after Bryant returned, and Beno Udrih's layup with 3:17 left put Sacramento ahead 110-92.



Sacramento Kings forward John Salmons, center, dunks over Los Angeles Lakers Lamar Odom, left, and Trevor Ariza, right, during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2008.

With Lakers starters Derek Fisher, Andrew Bynum and Vladimir Radmanovic shooting a combined 9-for-22, Bryant's struggles were magnified. Lamar Odom had just 11 points and eight rebounds in a reserve role.

Brad Miller scored 13 points and Udrih added 12 for the Kings, who avoided the longest home skid in 51 years for a franchise that began life as the Rochester Royals.

Sacramento had the NBA's most formidable home-court advantage earlier in the decade

when Chris Webber and Peja Stojakovic ruled Arco Arena and its noise-reflecting wooden bleachers, but the Kings had fallen several thousand fans short of filling the building in every game this season until the Lakers' many fans filled most of the empty seats Tuesday night. Arco still wasn't sold out, but the Kings got more push from the crowd than the visitors.

Martin missed the game with an injured left ankle after aggravating the problem during Sacramento's humiliating 33-point home loss to Denver last

Wednesday. The Kings don't know when Martin will return, but he already has missed 13 games this season with ankle problems.

Garcia filled in well, scoring 14 points in the first half and coming up with a handful of big baskets in the second half.

The Kings played with fresh legs after five days off, and Garcia scored 14 points in the first half as Sacramento took an early 11-point lead. After 2-of-9 shooting in the first half and four straight misses to open the third quarter, Bryant got going - but Salmons also heated up with 12 points in the third quarter to keep the Kings up 87-80 heading into the fourth.

Cavaliers 114, Raptors 94

At Cleveland, LeBron James scored 31 points and set the team record for steals and Zydrunas Ilgauskas became the Cavaliers' career leader in rebounds as Cleveland moved to 12-0 at home with a victory over the Toronto Raptors.

In winning their ninth straight by at least 12 points, the Cavaliers, now 17-1 since Nov. 3, are the first team in league history to win nine consecutive games in a single season so handily. Cleveland came in tied with Portland (1990-91), Chicago (1996-97), Detroit (2003-04) and Houston (2007-08).

And the way they're playing, it doesn't look like anyone can run with the Cavs right now. They've won the nine games in their streak by an average of 21.5 points.

Spurs 133, Mavericks 126, 2OT

At Dallas, Tim Duncan scored eight of his 32 points in the decisive second overtime and Tony Parker added 29 points and 10

assists as San Antonio won the latest thriller between these Interstate-35 rivals.

There were six lead changes and three ties just in the overtimes, until Bruce Bowen nailed an open 3-pointer from the right corner off a pass from Duncan to put San Antonio ahead for good. It came with 1:47 left and it was Bowen's only points.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 35 points and Jason Kidd added a season-high 24 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds, but Dallas lost for only the second time in their last 10 games. They also ended a five-game home winning streak.

Jazz 99, Timberwolves 96

At Minneapolis, Mehmet Okur hit the go-ahead shot with 1.7 seconds to play and Utah capitalized on 16 missed free throws by the hosts in Kevin McHale's season debut as Timberwolves coach.

Al Jefferson led Minnesota with 21 points. The Timberwolves led by seven with 2:45 to play, but rookie Kevin Love missed four straight free throws to allow the Jazz to hang around.

Kyle Korver's 3-pointer gave Utah a 95-94 lead with 54 seconds to go. After two free throws from Randy Foye gave the Wolves the lead again with 7.8 seconds left, Okur swished a fallaway jumper to put the Jazz on top for good.

Ronnie Brewer scored 25 points for the Jazz on the 20th anniversary of Jerry Sloan's promotion to the team's head coach.

Suns 125, Bucks 110

At Phoenix, Shaquille O'Neal scored a season-high 35 points as the Suns extended their domination of the Bucks in Arizona.

The Suns beat Milwaukee in Phoenix for the 21st straight time, matching the San Antonio Spurs' string of 21 straight home victories over Golden State for the longest active streak. The last Milwaukee victory in Phoenix came on Feb. 21, 1987, when the Suns played in Veterans Memorial Coliseum on the city's West Side.

O'Neal hit 14 of 19 shots from the floor and 7-of-12 from the line, and added eight rebounds and three blocks. It was O'Neal's first 30-point game since March 9, 2007, for Miami against Minnesota.

Charlie Villanueva scored 24 points, Michael Redd had 23 and Richard Jefferson added 22 for Milwaukee, which has lost six of its last eight games.

Wizards 107, Pistons 94

At Washington, Caron Butler scored 33 points, Juan Dixon added an unexpected 16 and Darius Songaila got a surprising

15 as Washington overcame a miserable start to rally over Detroit's redesigned lineup.

The Wizards improved to 3-5 under interim coach Ed Tapscott, while the Pistons have lost four of five and dropped to 7-9 since the trade for Allen Iverson. Iverson started at shooting guard Tuesday night but he wasn't much of a factor, scoring 13 points.

Richard Hamilton scored a season-high 29 points, Rasheed Wallace added 19, and new starting point guard Rodney Stuckey had 10 points and 11 assists for the Pistons.

Rockets 92, Hawks 84

At Houston, Yao Ming scored 24 points and grabbed a season-high 19 rebounds as Houston rallied in the fourth quarter to beat Atlanta.

Luis Scola added 12 points and 10 rebounds, Ron Artest scored 19 and the Rockets outrebounded Atlanta 57-40 to hand the Hawks their 10th consecutive loss in Houston.

Joe Johnson scored 22 points and Josh Smith added 13 points and 11 rebounds for the Hawks.

Bulls 105, Knicks 100

At Chicago, Larry Hughes hit a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 55 seconds to go as Chicago rallied in the fourth quarter to beat New York.

Drew Gooden led the Bulls with a season-high 22 points and 16 rebounds. Ben Gordon, who tied the game at 97 with a 3-pointer, added 17 points and Hughes had 16.

Al Harrington shot 13-for-21 from the field and finished with 28 points to lead the Knicks. Quentin Richardson added 22 points, while Chris Duhon scored 15, had 14 assists and grabbed nine rebounds in his return to the United Center. Duhon played his first four seasons for Chicago before signing with the Knicks as a free agent.

Magic 109, Trail Blazers 108

At Portland, Hedo Turkoglu hit a 3-pointer with less than one second remaining as Orlando rallied from a late eight-point deficit to beat Portland.

Orlando made 14 3-pointers and improved its Southeast Division-leading record to 17-5. Rashard Lewis hit six 3-pointers and led Orlando with 27 points and nine rebounds, while Turkoglu scored 24 points. Jameer Nelson hit four 3-pointers and added 21 points for the Magic.

Portland, which fell to 15-8 and into a first-place tie with Denver in the Northwest Division, was led by Brandon Roy, who scored a season-high 30 points. Roy hit 10 of 20 shots and scored 20 points during the second half.

Ballesteros released after brain surgery



MADRID, Spain (AP)—Seve Ballesteros thanked doctors and staff for giving him the chance to play the "mulligan of my life" on Tuesday when he was released from the hospital more than two months after brain surgery to remove a malignant tumor.

The 51-year-old Spanish golfing great will continue to be treated as an outpatient, Madrid's La Paz hospital said in a statement. Ballesteros thanked not only the neurosurgeons who performed the operations, but also the staff and well-wishers who showed support since he was hospitalized 66 days ago.

"Thanks to them I will be able to play the mulligan of my life, which I expect to enjoy at my best," Ballesteros said in a statement posted on his Web site. "There is a long recovery time ahead and I shall keep

fighting with patience and determination against the brain tumor that was detected at the beginning of October."

Ballesteros, one of Spain's best known sports personalities, was admitted Oct. 6 after fainting at Madrid's international airport before boarding a flight to Germany. Since then, he has undergone four separate operations, including a 6 1/2-hour procedure Oct. 24 to remove the brain tumor and reduce swelling around the brain. That was his third operation in eight days.

Ballesteros was released from intensive care last Wednesday—the first time he had been out of danger since his initial operation Oct. 15.

"Occasionally I was a rebel patient and therefore I ask them to forgive me and thank everyone for all the cares received," Ballesteros said.

A five-time major champion, Ballesteros is known for

spectacular shots and fearless play, but still called his current ordeal the "hardest challenge of my life."

"When you fight with faith and persistency you can overcome whichever drawback you come across. Our mind is stronger than we imagine," Ballesteros said. "Just as I always did in my professional life, visualizing success helps achieve ones targets however impossible they seem."

Ballesteros did not say whether he would continue his recuperation at a residence in Madrid, but said he was confident he could recover—both mentally and physically.

"I am a believer and will continue thinking positively to defeat the illness I suffer and encourage those who are going through something similar to do it with the same determination as myself," Ballesteros said.

Ballesteros won three British

Sources: K-Rod, Mets agree at \$37M



LAS VEGAS (AP)—Desperate for a closer, the New York Mets landed the top one available: Francisco Rodriguez.

Now, they have to figure out how to hand him the lead.

Coming off a record-setting season, Rodriguez reached a preliminary agreement Tuesday with the Mets on a \$37 million, three-year contract.

The sides still have to work out a written agreement and the pitcher must pass a physical, two people familiar with the negotiations said. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the contract had not been completed yet.

The agreement was reached Tuesday about 5 a.m., but the contract probably won't be finalized until next week at the earliest.

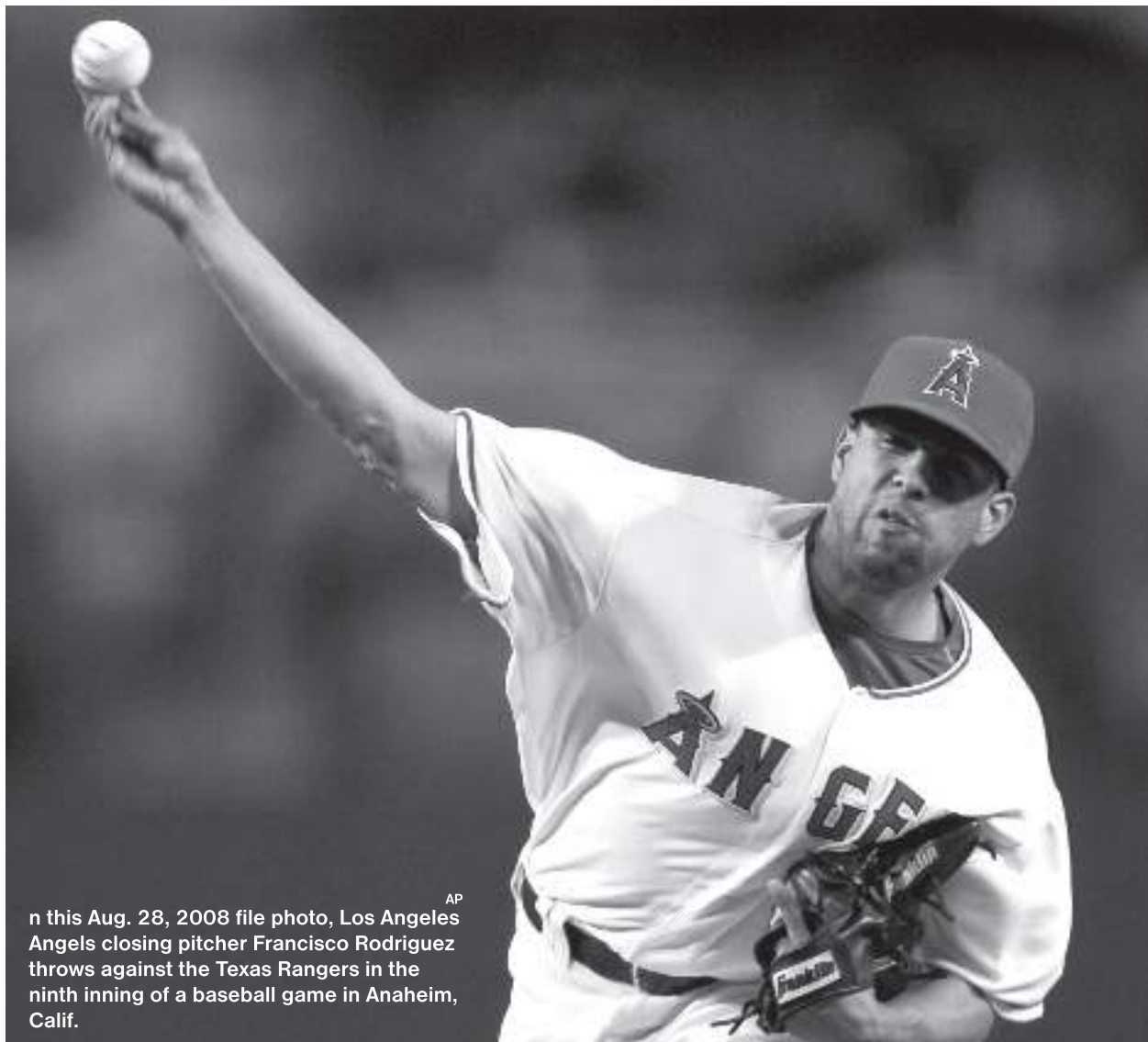
"Tired today," general manager Omar Minaya said, though he wouldn't confirm a deal for K-Rod. "We have a lot of stuff going on."

Rodriguez saved 62 games for the Los Angeles Angels this year, five more than the previous big league mark set by Bobby Thigpen of the Chicago White Sox in 1990, and then filed for free agency. Rodriguez's agent, Paul Kinzer, had hoped to get a five-year contract, possibly equaling the \$15 million average salary Mariano Rivera is earning from the New York Yankees.

But with baseball executives worried about the national recession, Kinzer accepted a more modest deal. The Mets were a natural fit because they were one of the few big-market teams looking for an elite closer this offseason.

All-Star Billy Wagner is expected to miss all of next season following elbow ligament replacement surgery.

"The way that we lost so many close games late, I think that was critical for us to—theoretically—address this thing here. We have addressed it very well,"



AP
In this Aug. 28, 2008 file photo, Los Angeles Angels closing pitcher Francisco Rodriguez throws against the Texas Rangers in the ninth inning of a baseball game in Anaheim, Calif.

manager Jerry Manuel said, laughing. "I mean, they say the word on the street is good. It's good. That's just the word on the street. We've got to get it written down."

K-Rod could fit in with New York in another way, too. Some take exception to his antics on the mound, and the Mets have drawn the ire of opposing teams for their boisterous celebrations.

The fact that several free-agent closers were available probably drove down Rodriguez's market value. Coming off its

second consecutive September collapse, New York got a boost as it prepares for its first season at Citi Field, an \$800 million ballpark built adjacent to Shea Stadium.

With the agreement, the Mets are ceasing negotiations with Brian Fuentes and career saves leader Trevor Hoffman, two other free-agent closers, one of the people said. Rodriguez's contract will contain an option for 2012 that could become guaranteed based on his performance, the person said.

"He's a competitor. That's why he's one of the guys that we've been looking at," Minaya said.

The Mets still have a hole in their rotation and a shaky setup situation, however. So Minaya knows he might have more work to do on the bullpen.

"We have to find ways to change it up a little bit, find ways to have a different look to what we do back there," he said. "We're going to look at some free agents and we're going to look at that through some trades. I don't feel that we should just tell ourselves the only thing we need is one guy."

As for finding a starter, Minaya said he probably would meet with Oliver Perez's agent, Scott Boras, before the winter meetings end on Thursday. Perez, a free agent, was acquired by the Mets in 2006 and went 10-7 with a 4.22 ERA in 34 starts this year.

Minaya also said he had spoken to the agent for Pedro Martinez, who spent the past four seasons with the Mets.

Rodriguez, a three-time All-Star who turns 27 next month, was regarded as the premier closer on the market. While some teams were worried about his violent pitching motion and drop in velocity last season, he developed an outstanding changeup to go along with his other pitches.

"A very confident young man. He's an exciting guy to talk about," Manuel said. "Anytime you acquire a person at that level, it raises the level of everybody else. It's almost the same as saying Johan (Santana) is pitching. You see a different spirit with your team. To have a guy, a guy of that sort at the end of a ballgame, is very important, very critical for us. Or for anybody."

Rodriguez and Kinzer arrived in Las Vegas last weekend and dined Sunday night with Minaya, chief operating officer Jeff Wilpon and other team officials at a steakhouse. Turns out, it didn't take long to reach an agreement.

In a slow free-agent market, Rodriguez was the first of the top-tier free agents to reach an agreement. Starting pitchers CC Sabathia and A.J. Burnett, first baseman Mark Teixeira and outfielder Manny Ramirez are among the high-profile players still searching for deals.

Union appeals suspension, fine of Burress



EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—The NFL Players Association filed a grievance on Tuesday challenging the suspension and fine given to Plaxico Burress by the New York Giants after the receiver accidentally shot himself in a nightclub more than a week ago.

The union said that the team violated the collective bargaining agreement last week when it placed Burress on the reserve-non football injury list, suspended him for the final four games of the regular season and fined him an additional week's salary for conduct detrimental to the team.

Placing Burress on the non-football injury list also will keep him out of the playoffs. The Giants (11-2) won the NFC East title on Sunday.

Union spokesman Carl Francis said the grievance will be heard by an arbitrator after the season ends.

Under the contract that Burress signed in September, the Giants owe the Super Bowl star \$1 million of his signing bonus on Wednesday. Team spokesman Pat Hanlon had no comment on either the grievance and whether the team would pay the signing bonus.

Francis said the union would consider another grievance if the Giants withheld the payment.

Agent Drew Rosenhaus did not return either an e-mail or a telephone call left by The Associated Press seeking comment.

The union filed another grievance on Burress' behalf earlier this year after the Giants suspended him for a game and fined him two weeks pay for missing a team meeting in September.

The two sides eventually agreed to cut the fine in half, saving Burress about one game's pay—more than \$200,000.

The latest action against Burress was last Tuesday, just a day after the 31-year-old was booked and arraigned on charges of criminal possession of a weapon relating to the shooting in New York on Nov. 29.

He pleaded not guilty, posted \$100,000 bail and left.

The shooting was the latest run-in that Burress has had with the team since signing as a free agent in 2005. He has admitted to being fined dozens of times for violating team rules. In addition to his suspension in September, he also was fined \$45,000 by the league for abusing an official and throwing a ball into the stands in a game with San Francisco on Nov. 19.

Burress has not spoken about the shooting at the Latin Quarter nightclub in Manhattan, and the focus of the in-

vestigation the past week has been on the role of Giants middle linebacker Antonio Pierce.

After making authorities wait almost a week, Pierce talked to investigators on Friday about the shooting. Neither Pierce's attorney nor the police would reveal what was said.

Authorities are interested in why neither Pierce, who drove Burress to New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, nor Dr. Josyann Abisaab, the doctor who treated the receiver, called police to report the shooting.

Abisaab has since been suspended for not reporting the gunshot injury, as required by law.

Police said that she is supposed to speak with authorities this week, but neither police and nor the district attorney's office refused to comment Tuesday when asked when the meeting would take place.

Burress was shot when he fumbled with the glass in his hand and the .40-caliber Glock that he was carrying in his pants slipped down his leg. The man who caught the go-ahead touchdown pass in the Super Bowl then reached for it and accidentally pulled the trigger and shot himself.

He faces a felony weapons possession charge that requires a mandatory minimum 3 1/2 years in prison.

NFL BRIEFS

NFL upholds 3-game suspension of Jags WR Jones

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP)—The Jacksonville Jaguars will play the rest of the season without their leading receiver. The NFL upheld Matt Jones' three-game suspension for violating the league's substance-abuse policy Tuesday, meaning Jones will sit out the final three games without pay. The league handed down the suspension in October, but Jones appealed. His hearing was last week in New York. "We have received notice from the league and will move ahead accordingly," coach Jack Del Rio said in a statement released by the team. "We spoke earlier and Matt indicated to me how intent he is on putting this behind him." Jones, who has 65 catches for 761 yards and two touchdowns, was charged with cocaine possession in July when a police officer in Fayetteville, Ark., saw him inside a parked car allegedly cutting up cocaine with a credit card. In September, Jones agreed to enter a drug treatment program that could erase the felony charge against him. A first-round draft pick in 2005, Jones was having the best year of his career. The former Arkansas quarterback emerged as Jacksonville's go-to receiver, but many wonder whether he will be back next season. With an escalating contract and having shown little big-play ability, the Jaguars might not be willing to take another chance on the 6-foot-6 target.

Economic slump makes NFL cut headquarters staff

NEW YORK (AP)—The recession has hit the NFL. The league said Tuesday it is cutting more than 10 percent of its headquarters staff in response to the downturn in the nation's economy. Commissioner Roger Goodell announced the cuts in a memo to league employees. The NFL is eliminating about 150 of its staff of 1,100 in New York, NFL Films in New Jersey and television and Internet production facilities in Los Angeles. "These are difficult and painful steps," Goodell wrote in the memo. "But they are necessary in the current economic environment. I would like to be able to report that we are not immune to the troubles around us, but we are not. Properly managed, I am confident the NFL will emerge stronger, more efficient and poised to pursue long-term growth opportunities." The NFL has been symbolic of the wealth surrounding professional sports—its players will be paid \$4.5 billion alone this year—but it now joins the NBA, NASCAR and the company that runs Major League Baseball's Internet division in announcing layoffs. The cuts will take place over the next 60 days, running past the Super Bowl, which will be played Feb. 1 in Tampa. Employees who volunteer to leave will be offered what was termed "a voluntary separation program." They are separate from the cuts in front-office and other personnel being made by the 32 individual teams. Goodell said last month in an interview with The Associated Press that the league and its teams could feel the economic slump in cutbacks in sponsorship and marketing.

2008 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League



The Koblerville Umangs pose with their coaches, PSS Commissioner Rita Sablan, standing far left, and Dandan Elementary School principal and U12 commissioner Jonas Barcinas, standing far right.



Whispering Palms/Brilliant Star boys and girls team and their coaches pose for a group photo after their consolation match against GTC and Dandan B.

Right, SIS was awarded with a Fair Play plaque during the award ceremony.

Far right, members of the Dandan Elementary School B with their third place trophy.

Below, NMIFA referees join the parade for the championship game.



Left, an SIS player goes for a kick, while two Koblerville defenders try to block it.

Right, Whispering Palms/Brilliant Star strikers are in charge of the NMIFA flag.

Far right, Whispering Palms/Brilliant Star strikers display the FIFA flag during the opening ceremony for the championship game in the 2008 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League Saturday at the Hopwood Junior High School Field.



Far left, the ball hits a Koblerville player after an SIS striker kicked it.

A Koblerville goalie goes for a save during the shootout against William S. Reyes Elementary School.

Photos By
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

NMC scores second win over DCCA

Northern Marianas College asserted its mastery over defending champion Department of Community and Cultural Affairs following NMC's 15-10 victory in the women's division match in the Budweiser 2008 Inter Government/Business Softball League Friday night at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield.

26

Saipan Tribune Sports

Kings snap 8-game skid, stun Lakers

Francisco Garcia and John Salmons scored 21 points apiece, and the Sacramento Kings snapped an eight-game losing streak with a surprising 113-101 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

24



28 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2008

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Wabol is RGA Cup champion

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Jess Wabol ended a seven-year drought in the RGA Club Championship after winning the 2008 edition of the annual event Sunday at the Kingfisher Golf Links.

Wabol carded a net 66 to beat nine other monthly Ace winners for the coveted Plas M. Tagabuel trophy. Nine other Refaluwasch Golf Association members joined the club championship, but only the monthly winners were eligible to claim the RGA Cup award, which was named after the departed Tagabuel, a former member of the club.

Wabol last hoisted the RGA Cup trophy in 2002 when he defeated 2001 champion John Guerrero and two-time winner Sasaki Oliver (2003 and 2005). Wabol now has four RGA Cup displayed in his rich collection of trophies.

The two-handicapper Wabol tamed the Talofoto course with a 4-under par 68, which was the lowest gross of the day. He was two strokes ahead of Joe Demapan and Asterio Tawanpiy, who shot identical net scores of 68.

Demapan defeated Tawanpiy in the tie-break for second with the former shooting better on the front nine.

The 14-handicapper Demapan fired a gross 82, while the 11-handicapper Tawan-

See WABOL on Page 26



RGA Cup 2008 champion Jess Wabol, second right, receives his trophy from newly-elected RGA president Jordan Kossam, right, during the awards ceremony at Hyatt Regency Saipan's Kili Café of Sunday night. Also in the photo are, from left, RGA treasurer Sonny Flores and RGA handicap director Tony Rogolofoi.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Wild Bill's tops women's futsal league



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of Wild Bill's pose for a group photo following the championship game of the Inaugural 2008 NMIFA Women's Futsal Fall League Saturday at the Northern Marianas College Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Wild Bill's has its name in the history books of CNMI futsal after ruling the Inaugural 2008 NMIFA Women's Futsal Fall League Saturday at the Northern Marianas

College Gymnasium.

Wild Bill's defeated five other teams for the championship of the first futsal league in the Commonwealth. Futsal is an indoor football game with teams having five players each on the court. It demands quick reflexes, fast thinking, and accurate ball control. Games are played in a basketball-style

court, with no walls and a low-bouncing ball, requiring players to use their skill rather than the ball's bounce to propel it.

The champion squad was captained by Jamie Beavis and was composed of Fedora Camacho, Mel Borja, Maria Ornes, Connie Camacho, Nola Hix, Veronica Saures, Catherine Anderson, Lindsay Davis, and Chirapan McGuire.

Wild Bill's secured the title after shutting out Marianas Technical Institute in the finals, 3-0.

The Law Offices of Matt Smith downed Marianas Medical Center, 3-1, in the battle for third place. Aon Insurance and Hardt Eye Clinic tied for fifth place.

The inaugural women's futsal

See WILD BILL'S on Page 26

Omori siblings triumph in youth badminton tourney

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Brothers Manatsu and Kanata Omori were crowned champions in the junior division of the 2nd Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Omori siblings bested three other pairs in the side event of the annual tournament organized by the Northern Marianas Badminton Federation.

The Omoris played for the Orange Team and after a round-robin tournament tied Green's Ezekiel Macario and Jenine Savellano, and Gray's

See OMORI on Page 26



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Junior division champions Manatsu and Kanata Omori, left, pose with Jenine Savellano and Ezekiel Macario after their match in the 2nd Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Namauleg, Sambile to make history tomorrow night

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

TRENCI TECH

morrow night when Tara "The Taran-

See NAMAULEG on Page 26

History will be made in the local MMA scene to-

morrow night when Tara "The Taran-

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jenipy "Salbahe" Sambile, left, and Tara "The Tarantula" Namauleg, will see action tomorrow night in Trench Warz IX: Annihilation at the Royal Taga Hall of the Saipan World Resort.

